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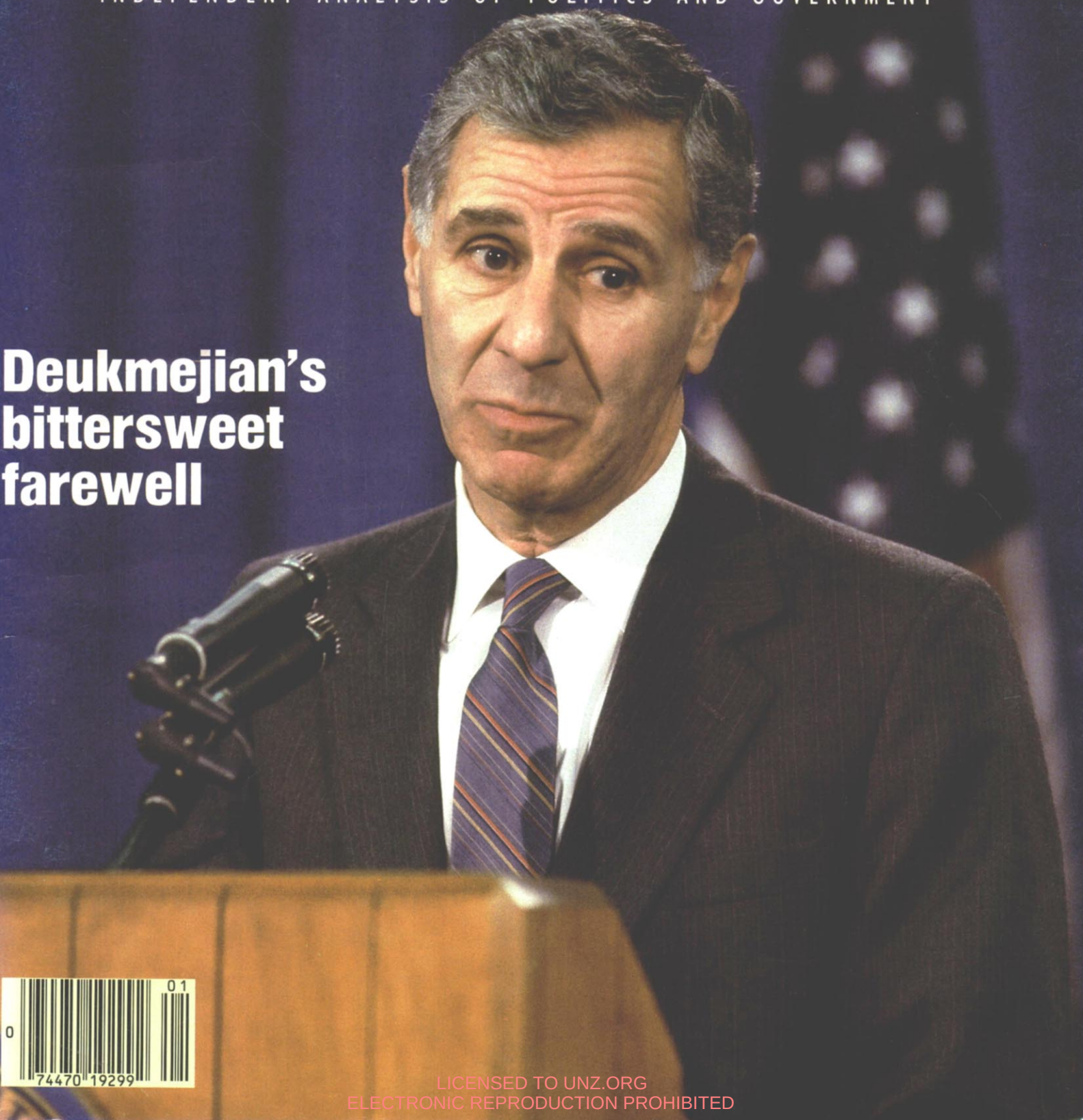

Deukmejian's bittersweet farewell

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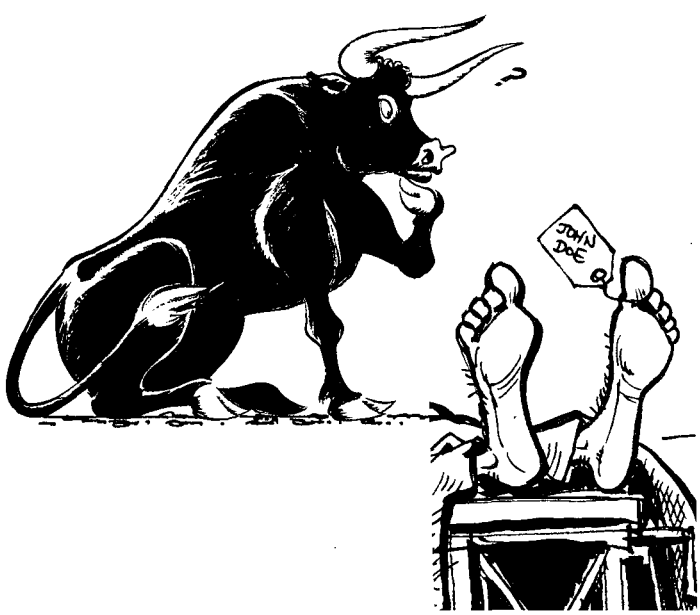

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UP FRONT

Hey! You're not Barbara Lee. It's a little bewildering to be newly anything, and especially daunting to be a new member of the state Legislature. So, it doesn't help matters when your identity is temporarily taken away before you even set foot inside the Capitol. Seems we did that to Barbara Lee, the newly elected Assembly member from the 13th District in Oakland. We ran Lee's picture three times in 1990 — in May before the primary, in July after the primary and in December after the general election. At least, we thought we ran Lee's picture. Actually, in July and December we ran the photo of Aleta Cannon, whom Lee beat in the June Democratic primary. The Lee and Cannon photos ran side-by-side in May, and again in July. But somewhere between those two issues, the captions were switched — a mistake we neglected to catch before running what we thought was Lee's picture again in December. Unfortunately, we compounded the goof when Assembly sergeants asked for photos of all the new members to help identify who should have access to the Assembly floor. We dutifully supplied the photo we thought was of Barbara Lee. Of course, it was of Cannon. So, for the record, officially and without further ado, here, for the first time since her election, correctly (drum roll) is (drum roll) the new assemblywoman from the 13th District ... let's really hear it out there for ... Barbara Lee:

Harmony, thy name isn't California. Republicans and Democrats in the state's congressional delegation have always been at each others' throats over one issue or another. Now, however, the *Los Angeles Times* reports that public squabbling has broken out inside each party. On the Republican side, a conservative faction led by William Dannemeyer and Bob Dornan recently bounced moderate Jerry Lewis as California's rep on a House GOP group that distributes committee assignments. The setback proved somewhat embarrassing for Lewis who had just been reelected by the entire House GOP caucus to a leadership position and who has been mentioned as a possible successor to Governor-elect Pete Wilson in the U.S. Senate. Conservatives also grabbed several other key positions — including liaison with state legislators over critical reapportionment decisions. The *Times* reports that the new point-man on redistricting will be former state Senator John Doolittle, who won a seat in Congress last November. He ousted Bill Thomas, a moderate from Bakersfield.

Democrats, too, engaged in an intra-party skirmish of note when Glenn Anderson of San Pedro was dumped as chairman of the House Public Works and Transportation Committee. According to the *Times*, the move to oust Anderson was led by another California Democrat — Norm Mineta of San Jose.

Speaking of reapportionment, we wouldn't want to be in the shoes of most of the state's congressional delegation. The members of Congress lifted not a finger to help legislative Democrats and Republicans defeat the six-year term-limit approved by voters in Proposition 140. Now, those congressional seats — which have no term limits — are looking mighty juicy to senators and members of the Assembly. And guess who draws the lines for everyone?

Rumors abound that Mike Galizio is out as Willie Brown's chief of staff. Galizio supposedly will move over to the Assembly Committee on Elections and Reapportionment — a key battleground in the coming session. Committee sources deny it.

Assemblyman Tim Leslie wasted no time jockeying for the state Senate seat left vacant by the election of John Doolittle to Congress. Seems, however, that Leslie isn't conservative enough for some Republicans — notably former Senator H.L. Richardson, who is pushing Placer County Supervisor Mike Fluty. Sacramento Supervisor Sandy Smoley, who lost a Senate bid to Democrat Leroy Greene in 1986, toyed with running but bowed out in mid-December. Leslie and Fluty likely will square off in a special election early this year, with Democrat Patti Mattingly also on the ballot. Mattingly is a Siskiyou County supervisor. If no candidate gets more than 50 percent of the vote, the

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top Republican and Democrat will meet in a run-off. If Leslie wins the seat, another special election would have to be held to replace him in the Assembly. And you thought the election season was over.

"As I look around me today [in Congress], I see more people who remind me of Daffy Duck than of Thomas Jefferson. The problem with amending the Bill of Rights is that it's like eating potato chips: Once you've eaten one, it's hard to stop."

— *Democrat David Obey of Wisconsin*

Come across a blurb lately that's nosy, newsy or smart-alecky about California government, politics or politicians? Share it with the Journal. *We pay up to $25 for entertaining tidbits published in "Up Front." So, rush your items to Up Front, 1714 Capitol Avenue, Sacramento, CA 95814. Sorry, submissions cannot be returned.*

ROSTRUM

Clay Hage

Regarding *California Journal's* recent analysis of the 68th Assembly District race between Democrat Steve Clute and Republican Clay Hage (see *CJ*, December 1990), although incumbent Clute was reelected to a fifth term, Clay Hage was hardly a "yawn." Anyone who heard Hage on the stump will tell you that he was a very dynamic and exciting speaker who proved to be a strong competitor and debater. Whether before a group of senior citizens, business leaders, mobile-home residents or high-school students, Hage generated genuine excitement and enthusiasm for his campaign. The final results do not tell the whole story because, in reality, Hage received several percentage points more than the Republican registration in that district.

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A bittersweet farewell

George Deukmejian kept his word, but was it enough?

By Richard Zeiger

Governor George Deukmejian is a man of convictions. He's a man who has kept his promises.

This has caused him no end of troubles.

After eight years as governor, George Deukmejian is leaving California government, with a few notable exceptions, much as he found it. When he came to office eight years ago, he promised little more. He wanted government to operate efficiently, to hold down spending, and to improve the state's business climate. He has done all that, but his critics say they expected — and he should have done — more.

In only one area — the state's criminal justice system — has Deukmejian made substantial changes. He has built 15 new prisons, increasing by 250 percent the number of Californians behind bars and increasing the Department of Corrections' budget by 310 percent. He signed dozens of laws toughening prison sentences, won voter approval for his measure to find more jobs for prisoners, and reshaped

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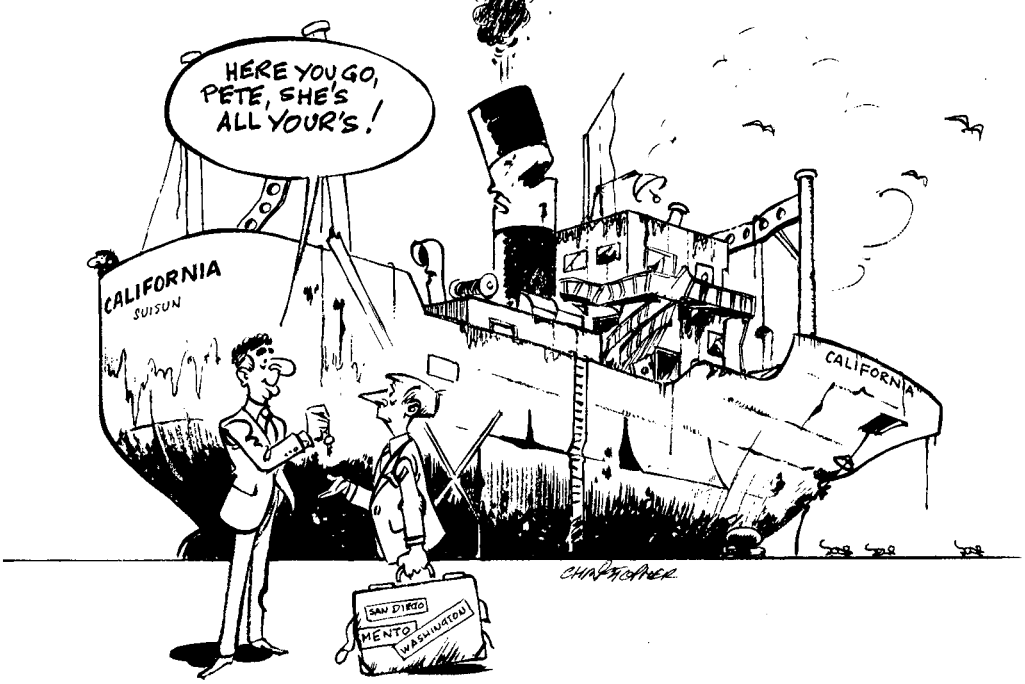


the state's judiciary to match his hard-line approach to criminals by appointing two-thirds of the judges now sitting.

But to his critics, the Deukmejian stewardship fell woefully short of what was needed to cope with a state that is growing quickly and whose population is changing rapidly.

But to Deukmejian himself, he has done what he said he would do: restore "common sense" to a government that had been knocked askew by the freewheeling Jerry Brown; establish a climate where private businesses could flourish; and keep the state's finances in order.

"I honestly feel that we accomplished virtually everything we set out to do," Deukmejian told reporters during one of his last interviews as governor.

That's just the problem, say the critics: George Deukmejian never wanted to do much — not nearly what the state needed to get done.

"He did what he set out to do," conceded Senate President pro Tempore David Roberti. "The problem is the treadmill moved along a lot more swiftly than the runner."

"I think the state was put on hold, and lost some of its luster," said Assembly Speaker Willie Brown Jr. "We occupied the premier position in some areas — education, health care, protection for the environment, the road system. His hold position actually caused the state to slip backward."

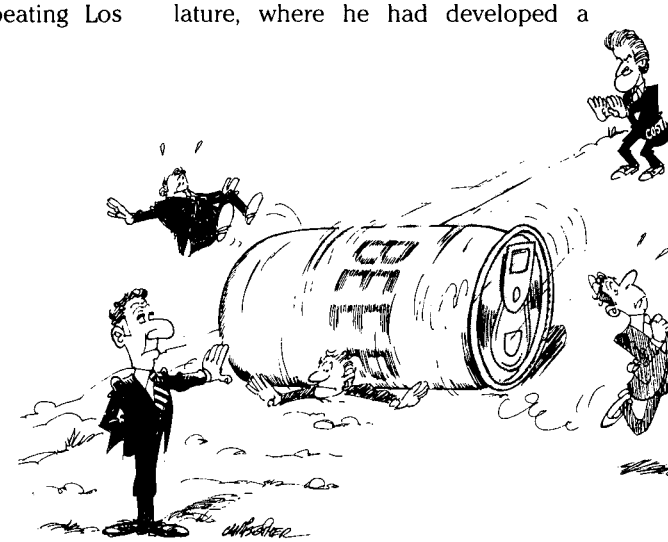
But the governor's backers say there can never be enough government to satisfy critics like Brown. Furthermore, to do more, he would have had to turn his back on the voters who elected him to office.

"Here's a guy who kept his word," who did what he said he would do, and now he is being criticized for it," noted Steve Merksamer, who was the governor's first chief of staff and now is a Sacramento lawyer.

Although Deukmejian just scraped into office in 1982, beating Los Angeles Mayor Tom Bradley by less than 1 percent of the vote cast, it was clear that voters were ready for a traditional governorship after eight years of Jerry Brown. Either of the nominees would have provided that.

But Deukmejian campaigned openly that he would roll back government to an earlier era. He said, for example, that he wanted to eliminate the state Coastal Commission (something he never did achieve) and return control over coastal areas to local government. He pledged not to raise taxes and, of course, to save the criminal justice system from the liberal judges he said had been appointed by Jerry Brown.

It should have been no surprise to anyone that George Deukmejian was a conservative, but it was a surprise just how conservative he turned out to be. After all, his opponent in the primary was Mike Curb, the darling of the Republican right-wing. And Deukmejian had spent 16 years in the Legislature, where he had developed a



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reputation as a workmanlike, if unspectacular, lawmaker. He had even been the author of Ronald Reagan's tax-increase package, which at the time was the largest ever approved in the state.

Indeed, it was probably this failure to meet Democratic expectations that created much of the rift between the governor and the Legislature that was to last for most of Deukmejian's two terms. Legislators, particularly the Democrats who dominated both houses in 1983, were certain the incoming governor would have no choice but to accept a tax increase in order to finish the fiscal year in the black and have enough money for the next year.

But Deukmejian confounded those expectations. Although he approved tax changes that raised close to $1 billion — which he referred to as "loophole closing" — he avoided a general tax increase. Furthermore, he let the state finish the year in the red. He transferred the debt into the next fiscal year and gambled that the economy would improve. He won that gamble, and it has been a proud boast of his administration, indeed its cornerstone, that he took the state "from IOU to A-OK."

Even though the governor hammered out a budget-fixing agreement with legislators in his first year, it was during the course of those negotiations that the relationship began to sour. A former Deukmejian aide tells of a first negotiating session where the straight-laced Deukmejian was confronted by an intransigent, cursing legislator.

"He never uses that language, and he was beside himself that it was used in his presence," said the aide. "You could just see him fuming."

It was shortly thereafter that incident that the governor, during a press conference, said that one of his chief goals was to restore "civility" to the legislative process. It was one of the few objectives on his sparse agenda that he failed to achieve.

Relations with the Legislature deteriorated further when the state Senate rejected his nomination of longtime aide Michael Franchetti as director of finance. Franchetti was one of the governor's top political operatives and a moderating voice among the conservative staff. His loss caused Deukmejian to distrust legislators, and it coalesced power into the hands of chief of staff Steve Merksamer. Merksamer maintains he always tried to give Deukmejian all points of view, but he, too, says that Franchetti's loss caused the governor to become more isolated.

Furthermore, the governor's own personality made it difficult for him to deal with lawmakers.

Merksamer refers to Deukmejian as "old world," formal in his relationships, who rarely built strong personal friendships with other elected officials. He didn't like the public posturing of negotiations. He said what he thought should be done, and then sat back, waiting for others to come to the same conclusion.

To his supporters this approach

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marked determination and conviction. But to Democrats in the Legislature, it was the stubbornness that led to the nickname the "Iron Duke." It was with pride that Deukmejian, last October, devoted his weekly radio address to the fact that he had vetoed 2298 bills during his eight-year term, more than Jerry Brown and Ronald Reagan combined. When added to the number of times he had cut expenditures with his "blue-pencil" line-item veto authority, the count reached 4000, with taxpayers being spared nearly $7 billion in state spending.

But this character trait clearly caused the governor problems. Three years ago, for instance, Deukmejian was also faced with budget problems and reluctantly agreed to a series of "temporary minimal adjustments" in state revenues to cover some of the shortfall. But the press and critics in his own party insisted these were really tax increases, and when the governor found he couldn't shake that label, he withdrew the proposal rather than be accused of sanctioning new taxes.

Indeed, the governor stuck so tenaciously to his no-tax-increase stance that he nearly allowed the state's highway construction program to collapse. Highway construction, of course, is as dear to Republican interests as to Democratic, and the business community pushed hard on Deukmejian for a gasoline tax increase to keep the construction program — which Deukmejian boasted he would revive after the mass-transit orientation of Jerry Brown — on track. In the end, the best he could do was allow himself to put the issue before voters, who barely approved the tax increase in June 1990.

Deukmejian wanted to make sure that nothing would disrupt what he saw as the crowning achievement of his administration: the balancing of the state's budget without general tax increases.

Given that pride, it has to be particularly galling to Deukmejian that he is leaving incoming Governor Pete Wilson with a worse budget problem than he inherited from Brown. Recent estimates say that the budget next year will be some $6 billion short of what's needed to maintain current programs. Even given the higher cost of government, that's a deficit twice the size of the one Deukmejian had to face in his first year.

The governor's supporters maintain that the shortage is not Deukmejian's fault. They point to several factors which put much of the budget outside the governor's control: among them, voter-approved Proposition 98, which guarantees about 40 percent of the state budget will go toward public education; and other programs enacted by the Legislature with guaranteed cost-of-living increases built into the programs.

And until last year, Deukmejian was also hampered by the spending limit voters approved with Proposition 4. One of the main purposes of that measure was to reduce the state's share of the overall state economy, and it succeeded. In one Deukmejian

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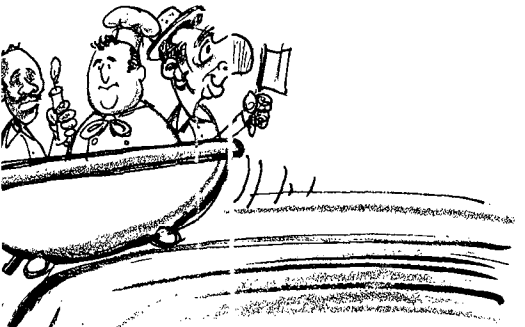

budget year, the governor presided over a $1 billion tax rebate. But the state budget might have survived all this, say the governor's defenders, were it not for the fact that the country is heading into a recession, and that the Mideast crisis has increased the price of oil.

But Deukmejian was quick to claim credit for good times while the state's economy was booming, although state policy has only a modest effect on the boom, and for at least six years this boom economy filled state coffers making the balancing of state budgets comparatively easy.

As a result, Deukmejian never had to come face-to-face with the central problem: the number of people who depend on the state for services — students, those who cannot afford health care and those the state has put in jail — are increasing far faster than the state budget. These three budget categories account for some 75 percent of the state's general-fund budget. Opinion polls consistently show that the public is willing to spend more in these areas — not less. If state spending is to be held down, cuts must be made in these popular programs. The Legislature, including many Republicans, has been unwilling to do this.

Even if Deukmejian had been inclined to raise state taxes, he might have found it difficult. Resistance within his own party, particularly from Assembly Republicans, was strong, and the constitutional requirement of a two-thirds vote on tax measures made support from this group a necessity.

Indeed, Assembly Republicans clearly pushed Deukmejian further to the right than he wanted. They blocked any number of policies themselves, and had Deukmejian veto others. In exchange, they guaranteed that no Deukmejian veto would ever be overridden in their house. It was a high price to pay, but Deukmejian was willing to pay it, and he can retire from the governorship saying he had never suffered a veto override.

In the second term, Deukmejian was also pushed further to the right by his own staff. By the end of his first four years, most of the governor's original inner circle — the pragmatists who had helped him win office in the first place — had departed. These included Franchetti, Merksamer, Press Secretary Larry Thomas, the campaign duo of Sal Russo and Doug Watts, and legislative liaison Rod Blonien.

In most cases Deukmejian filled up these spots with people already on the governor's staff. Many were ideologically more rigid than the first team and, in some instances, their strongest claim to a job was that they had loyally served in the first term.

"It's true that in this case a trait that normally seems admirable — loyalty — may not have served him well," said one of the former staff members.

It was at his staff's behest, for example, that Deukmejian tried to unilaterally dismantle the state's job-safety program, Cal-OSHA, which sets health and safety regulations for private in-

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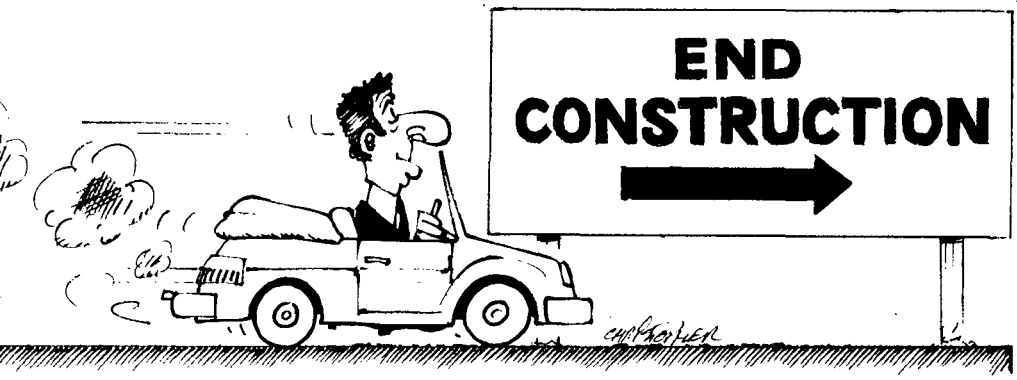

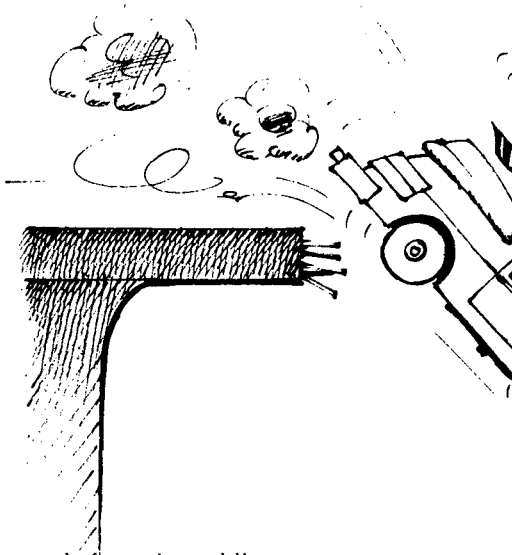

dustry. The program has long been criticized by conservatives, but when the governor abolished it, even the business interests that support him balked. For all its difficulties, adherence to Cal-OSHA regulations keeps insurance rates down, which amounts to a savings for businesses. The program was also popular with voters, who promptly restored it.

Another constant problem for the governor was his tepid relations with the Capitol press corps. Used to easy access to former Governor Jerry Brown, the press chafed at the formality of the Deukmejian governorship. Deukmejian granted few individual interviews, held press conferences only sporadically and was surrounded by aides who almost never gossiped about the administration's inner workings.

Deukmejian advisors believed that they could, in great measure, control press coverage. Indeed, James Robinson, who was director of public affairs and communications in the second term, wrote a book aimed at business executives that contained just such a premise.

The formal approach suited Deukmejian's personality as well. He is a private man who rarely invited the press to his home or allowed them to view his private life with his wife Gloria or his children. His close associates say this formal approach left the press corps with a distorted view that Deukmejian was cold and uncaring.

Merksamer notes that, unbeknownst to the press, Deukmejian would frequently ditch his state police escort, driving himself to the supermarket, he and Gloria to the movies or to a private party.

"In casual clothes, with his glasses on that he rarely wore in public, hardly anyone ever recognized him," Merksamer said.

Furthermore, they note that he could be passionate on some subjects, notably the question of the killings of his Armenian forefathers by Turks.

But this side remained largely hidden from the press, and consequently from the public.

And Deukmejian paid a price for this limited access and stern dealing with reporters. When the governor wanted to get across his own point of view, he found all the informal channels of communication had long-ago been cut off.

"In retrospect, I wish we had let some reporters get closer," said Thomas.

But the closed approach continued until the end of his term. In the last weeks of his administration, Deukmejian granted only limited interviews to reporters wanting to ask him about his eight years in office. Most of these were group interviews, and, in a last fit of pique, members of the press corps who were out of favor where shut out entirely.

It's too bad, reflect some of the Deukmejian crew, because a chance was missed to tell the press and public about the better side of Deukmejian. Thomas, for one, believes that the governor has been treated unfairly on the

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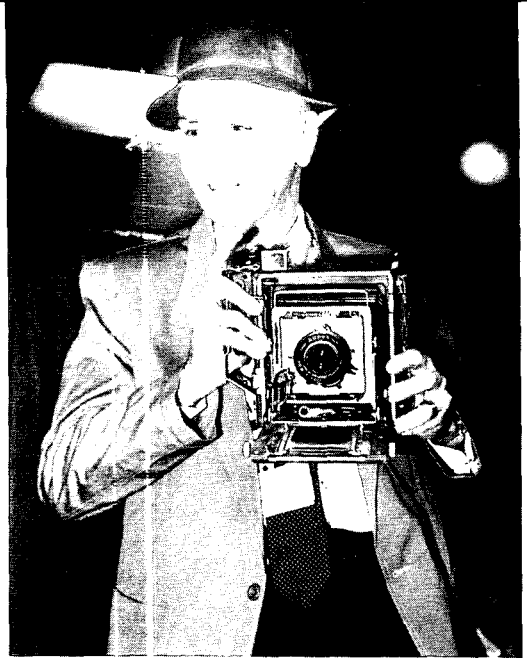

question of funding for the state's schools.

In fact, Deukmejian has, in relative terms, been generous with the school system. It wasn't Deukmejian, but Democrat Jerry Brown who starved the school system to the point where California was spending less per student than most other states. In the Deukmejian years, school attendance was growing so fast that Deukmejian — committed to holding taxes down — could never dig himself out of the hole.

Still, under Deukmejian, state spending for schools increased by 65 percent after adjusting for inflation, outpacing the 23 percent enrollment increase that occurred in the eight-year period.

And spending at the University of California nearly doubled during the eight years. Unlike other officials in the education community, University of California President David Gardner has widely praised Deukmejian for saving the nine-campus system from sliding into second-rate status that was imminent because of budget strictures in the Brown years.

Much of Deukmejian's problems on the education issue were no doubt the result of his personal feud with Superintendent of Public Instruction Bill Honig. The governor's office viewed Honig as a potential rival for the governorship, and Honig's personal style — he tended to lecture the governor and harp about him to the press — annoyed Deukmejian. From the Deukmejian viewpoint, Honig was an ingrate who complained that whatever was done for education was not enough.

The feud with Honig revealed another side of the Deukmejian personality: He was thin-skinned for someone who had been in public life for 28 years. It wasn't the only example, however. For instance, Deukmejian once cut out all money for family planning programs after supporters of these groups ran a series of newspaper advertisements criticizing the governor. Most experts agree that these programs are an excellent financial investment for the state, since preventing unwanted pregnancies is much less expensive that caring for unwanted babies or providing abortions.

But if Deukmejian occasionally became sidetracked, his main purpose — running government efficiently and economically — was never out of sight. As for tackling the array of problems that plague the state, that would have to wait for another time.

By the close of his administration, both of the major party candidates to replace Deukmejian were campaigning on the notion that the state had to get moving again. Both Dianne Feinstein, who made the pitch openly, and Pete Wilson, who did it with more restraint, were candidates of change.

Regardless of whether history judges Deukmejian a leader or a caretaker, it will no doubt find that he governed with honesty and integrity. The public, of course, should expect no less. But these days, it seems a remarkable legacy indeed.

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BALLOT FRONT

A roundup of statewide initiative proposals. All statutes require 372,178 valid signatures; constitutional amendments require 595,485. In parentheses is the deadline for sponsors to submit signatures to county clerks, and the issue of California Journal *that contains a full explanation of each measure. The full texts of all initiatives may be obtained from the Secretary of State's election division, 1230 J Street, Sacramento CA 95814.*

New in circulation:

FIREARMS REGULATION — an initiative statute, sponsored by Kevin Patterson of Placerville, that would prohibit legislation, regulations or judicial rulings — by the Legislature or any other government legislative executive or administrative agency — which would restrict, regulate, bar, prohibit or limit firearms with a confirming vote of a majority of the people. Also included are firearms components, ammo, ammo components, firearm accessories, or the sale, transfer, manufacture, possession or lawful use of any firearm or firearm components. Finally, the measure has an effective date of January 1, 1989, and thus repeals specified gun legislation. Proponents failed to qualify a similar proposal several months ago. (March 18, 1991)

Continuing in circulation:

STATE OPERATED AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE. AUTO CLAIMS. ADMINISTRATIVE COURT — an initiative statute, sponsored by Voter Revolt members Angelo Paparella, Rob Lavis, Bill Zimmerman and Proposition 103 sponsor Harvey Rosenfield. (December 13th, September 1990 *CJ*).

TAX AND SPENDING LIMITS — an initiative constitutional amendment, sponsored by Mark Buckley of Placerville. (January 4, 1991, October 1990 *CJ*)

Failed to qualify:

FIREARMS REGULATION — an initiative statute, sponsored by Kevin Patterson of Camino. (June 1990 *CJ*)

STATE ADMINISTERED AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE, AUTOMOBILE CLAIMS COURT — an initiative constitutional amendment, sponsored by Carmen Gonzalez and Angelo Paparella of Los Angeles, Rob Lavis of Oakland, Bill Zimmerman of Topanga Canyon and Proposition 103 author Harvey Rosenfield of Santa Monica. (October 18th, August 1990 *CJ*)

WORKERS, VACATION — an initiative constitutional amendment, sponsored by Richard Such of Palo Alto. (October 22nd, August 1990 *CJ*)

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Chief of Staff Bob White

A life dedicated to Pete Wilson

By Ron Roach

Photo by Rich Pedronce

He wasn't on the ballot, but Bob White became more important than most elected politicians in California when Pete Wilson won the governorship last November.

Wilson had made it known long ago that his top aide for 22 years would be his chief of staff at the statehouse -- a role White has filled for the past eight years for U.S. Senator Pete Wilson. Before that, White was chief of staff to San Diego Mayor Pete Wilson for 11 years.

Politician and loyal aide have been a team since White joined Wilson for his 1968 re-election campaign to the state Assembly and then became his administrative assistant in Sacramento.

How close are Wilson and White? A San Diego political consultant, John Kern, remembers the early 1970s "when *they* were mayor of San Diego." Kern, a former political reporter, said there was no confusion over Wilson's role as boss, but Wilson and White formed "a very effective team. When you talked to Bob, you have talked to Pete."

Thus Robert Stanley White — 48, born and raised just east of San Diego in La Mesa, son of a building contractor — becomes a very important person in state government, the most important unelected figure on the Sacramento scene.

White has endured as Wilson's closest advisor because he is not a "micro-manager," said Larry Thomas, who was Wilson's City Hall press secretary and left after Wilson's unsuccessful campaign for governor in 1978. "He's a decisive manager. He knows Pete so well, he is like an alter ego to him. They have a very special relationship."

White's key to success over the years, said Thomas, who also was press secretary to Governor George Deukmejian, is that "he tries to select very good people to work for Pete, and he gives them lots of responsibility."

Another strength, according to Kern, is that White

Ron Roach is Sacramento bureau chief for the San Diego Tribune.

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"knows when he does not know" Wilson's thinking on a particular issue, and he huddles with Wilson before saying anything.

"He's very thorough," said John Witzel, former Sacramento lobbyist for the City of San Diego. "He's so completely attuned to Pete that I'm sure he evaluates everything in terms of how it fits Pete."

Wilson and White have been described as opposites — the reserved Wilson and the gregarious White. "I think that has been exaggerated on both sides," said Witzel. "Pete can be incredibly charming at a social affair, and Bob can be reserved."

White goes out of his way to meet people, and he remembers their names. It's as though he is still rushing pledges for his fraternity — Sigma Chi — at San Diego State University, where he graduated with a journalism degree. He had been head cheerleader and class president every year at Helix High School in La Mesa.

Except for one year as a traveling representative of his fraternity, White has spent virtually his entire adult life working for Wilson. Cross Wilson and you've crossed White. Some even have said that White responds to criticism of Wilson as though his mother was the victim.

"I'm sure if somebody did a disservice to Pete that wasn't above-board and fair, Bob would not forget easily," Witzel said. "I would not want him to be an enemy. He can be very tough, direct and blunt."

In one profile, a former legislative aide recalled the "White tornado" temper when White was dissatisfied with a staff performance, but his anger quickly subsided. An effective manager cannot be a "Pollyanna," said White.

Thomas said White is a "gentleman in many respects but he doesn't suffer silently if he feels Pete has been treated unfairly. He has a long memory, for the good and the bad. Loyalty is very admirable in life, and it is essential in politics."

White delegates authority with clear directions, said Witzel, adding, "I never misunderstood what he wanted. He communicates very well."

Yet White seems to shy away from the public eye and was not thrilled over the prospect of having reporters lined up to write profile interviews after the November election. Mostly, reporters wanted to know if Wilson manages White or vice versa.

Wilson makes the decisions, White said, but, "We have had strong disagreements. You bring certain philosophies and viewpoints to a job, but he's the final decision-maker. Sometimes you change his mind and sometimes you don't."

White says that over the years Wilson usually wins the arguments, but not all of them. He refuses to identify issues of disagreement.

"It's like anything else. You do your job. You make your best pitch. You come to an agreement. As long as he respects your opinion and listens to you, even if he goes against you, clearly it is your job to go out and represent that view. So that is the reason that, publicly, I would never mention an issue [of dispute]."

Wilson has said that White "combines extraordinary political instincts with a genuine desire for good public policy."

White was prodded by Otto Bos, Wilson's communications director, to consent to profile interviews. Last spring,

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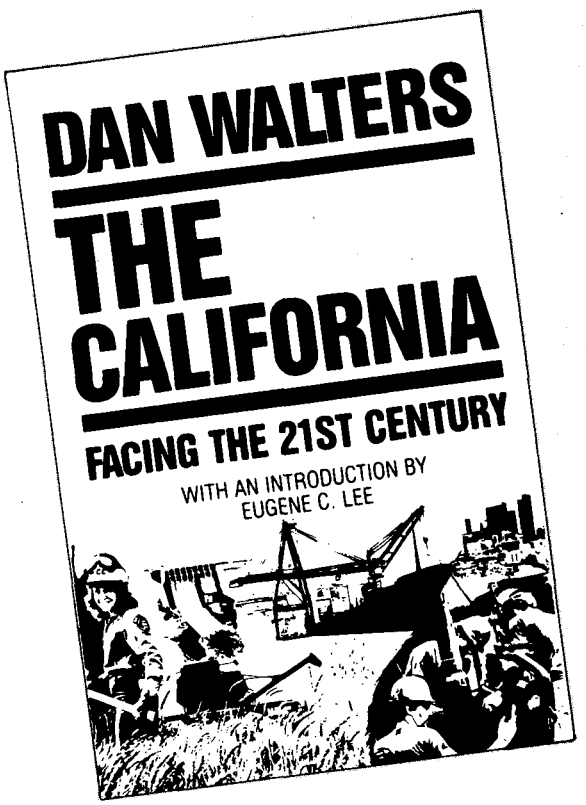

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by Dan Walters
with an introduction
by Eugene C. Lee

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in a Copley News Service profile from Washington, D.C., it was suggested that White got excited about an issue as it became politically hot. A Washington lobbyist was quoted as saying White did not get "bogged down with details."

White said his father read the story and felt "I had been painted into looking like a very shallow person, and that I should never talk to another reporter again."

White said that one reason he has stayed with Wilson so long is the chance to work with substantial issues.

"I'm sure if you talked to Pete he would find that [White avoids involvement in substantial policy issues] to be the funniest line of them all ... by someone who, I'm sure, will never say that again. Of course, how could you possibly do this without getting involved in policy?

"I often don't get involved in the implementation of [policy], but I hire the people who do that. Clearly it is the policy decision that is reached ... that is what your job is. I always found it kind of curious that anybody would say that, "White responded.

White dresses well — expensive ties, cuff links, suspenders, gold watch. He enjoys wearing tuxedos and is socially charming and attentive to detail. A lifelong bachelor, White has been described as picking attractive women as dates on the basis of how they fit in at dinner parties, calling the host or hostess ahead of time to determine who is on the guest list.

As Wilson's top aide, White made $85,000 a year in Washington plus political consulting work on the side. As chief of staff in the governor's office, White expects to make between $100,000 and $105,000 a year — compared to the governor's $120,000 salary.

Thomas said of White: "He was best man at my wedding. He probably has been best man at more than 25 weddings [Not that many, says White]. Few of us are best man at one or two. To be asked by so many people shows loyalty to friends and how well they regard him. He's a wonderful people person. He goes out of his way to befriend people. I bet he knew the names of the janitor and the parking lot attendant at City Hall."

White is not expected to be widely quoted as a Wilson spokesman. That is why Wilson hires a press secretary, he said. Nor does White feel that people have to go through him to get to Wilson.

"From a management perspective, the more contact Pete has with the person who made the recommendation for policy, or the person with the expertise, the more that he can get together with them and go through things when he is making decisions," White said. "... Within a pretty tight structure, you will have the opportunity to not be afraid to say, or to bring up, things — unlike other administrations. I point more to Washington, where I have seen things like that happen over a period of time. I think it is important. You've got to shoot straight with the boss; you've got to shoot straight with yourself. You've got to be able to say, 'This is a problem and these are some options you have.'"

In six months or so, White said the administration may be evaluated by the media, reflecting how well he has staffed the office. He said the challenges facing the new governor and staff are awesome.

"We've got a legislative rapport situation; we've got huge budget problems that are absolutely sometimes mind boggling. There are some real tough questions that relate to where you are going to go," White explained. "For every reason you look at this and say, 'God, this is the craps,' on the other side it's the very reason why you want to do this, because the challenge is so extraordinary. You get in there and say, 'Hey, this is going to be interesting.' So you work your ass off 15 hours a day to get there."

White said he has been able to grow as a manager under Wilson, while hiring an effective group of loyal staffers over the years. The main reason the relationship has lasted so long, he said, is that neither man feels threatened.

"From the very beginning, I think you have to earn trust," White said. "He has been very willing to share responsibility and open up. I started off by doing those things he doesn't want to do, whatever. Then you develop enough confidence to get out [and represent the assemblyman, the mayor, the senator]."

White recalls the first year in the mayor's office, when he and Wilson had difficulty dealing with national Republican officials over their decision to pull the nominating convention out of San Diego. Now White is dealing with the White House over the possibility that San Diego will host the 1992 convention. Instead of being stonewalled in 1971, White said the White House and national Republican officials were being extremely cooperative.

He said he still chuckles over reports of how Wilson had to be persuaded to run for governor so soon after winning re-election in 1988. Wilson and White have preferred the executive branch for more than 20 years. They have wanted to be governor and chief of staff in Sacramento. They jumped at the opportunity, White said.

When White came to Sacramento in 1968, he said he was somewhat awestruck when he went to then-Governor Ronald Reagan's office and met Chief-of-Staff Ed Meese for the first time. "I wonder if people are going to feel that way about me," he said.

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LURING THE LATINO VOTE

The scramble for L.A. Cou

Gloria Molina, one of four main contenders to replace the crusty conservative Peter Schabarum on the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, is spending more time on the telephone than a love-struck teenager. With the help of others, she is trying to raise $50,000 every week until the January 22nd election takes place in the newly formed 1st Supervisorial District. The short, two-month campaign demands such efforts. "It's driving us crazy," said Molina, a member of the Los Angeles City Council since 1987. "Everybody working with me is on edge. Everything is intensified."

The prize is certainly worth the effort. The winner will have a constituency just shy of two million residents — the biggest in the state next to a constitutional officer. And the winner will become the most important Latino elected official in California, highly visible in the state's biggest media market and an instant contender for the U.S. Senate or for governor.

Tom Waldman is a freelance writer from Los Angeles.

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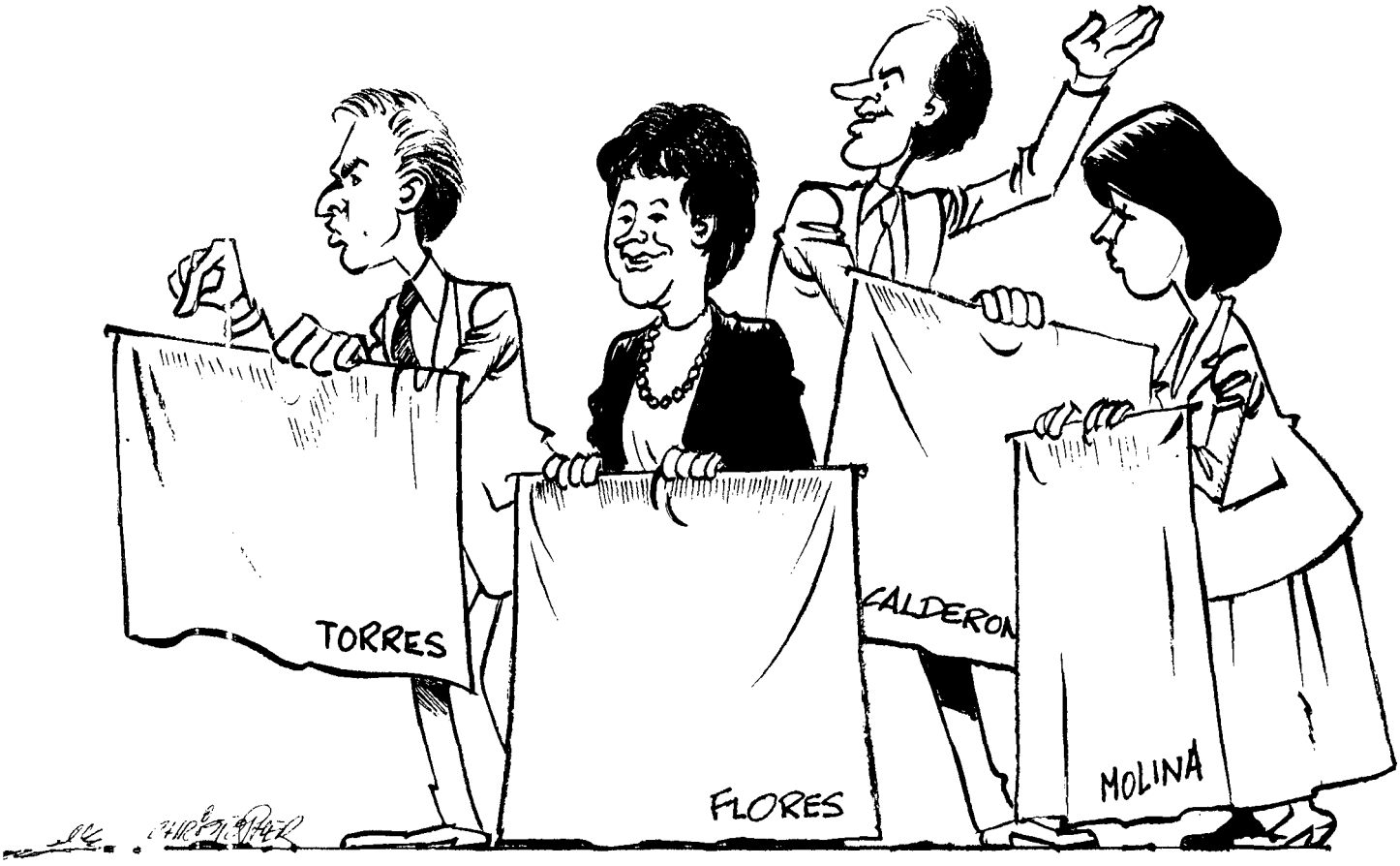

y's new supervisorial seat

By Tom Waldman

But hard work alone may not be enough to win this contest. In the opening days of the race, Molina heard from a close female companion that the woman's husband would not be making a contribution to the Molina-for-supervisor campaign because state Senator Art Torres, another candidate had already called seeking support. The man's blunt message: If Molina did not have the courtesy to phone him first, she could find somebody else to write her a check. From then on he was pledged to Torres.

It's not a surprise that Molina and Torres would be calling the same people: They are two of the best-known Latino Democrats in California, and they represent many of the same constituents.

Voters in this district get two campaigns disguised as one. The first, which has been well-documented by both the local and the national press, involves the simple historical truth that the winner will become only the second Latino member of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors in 115 years. A ruling earlier in the year by Federal District Judge David Kenyon that the board had systematically

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Redistricting by lawsuit

Observers of Los Angeles County politics are hailing the recent redistricting plan approved by U.S. District Judge David Kenyon last August, and subsequently upheld by an appellate court, as an historic decision that dramatically realigns the shape of county politics and gives a new voice to Latino voters. But they also criticize the ruling for stopping short of real reform.

The plan, which carves a predominantly Latino 1st District in East Los Angeles and parts of the San Gabriel Valley, was approved by Kenyon after he rejected a map prepared by the county Board of Supervisors' conservative majority. Kenyon characterized that plan as "nonsensical" and insensitive to Blacks and Latinos.

The new district boundaries, adopted after Kenyon ruled that the board's five Anglo supervisors intentionally discriminated against the county's three million Latinos when drawing district lines in 1981, opens the probability of the election of the first Latino supervisor in 115 years. Incumbent Supervisor Pete Schabarum, a career politician who (some say ironically) sponsored the voter approved term-limit measure for state lawmakers, Proposition 140, said he will retire after 24 years in public office.

"Whoever becomes supervisor for the 1st District as newly constituted is going to have to pay attention to issues of the Latino community," said Richard Fajardo, the Mexican-American Legal and Educational Defense Fund's (MALDEF) lead attorney in the lawsuit against the county. "For the first time, the Board of Supervisors is going to have to give Latinos a fair hearing."

The county case is part of a growing effort in California to open up governmental systems to minorities in a way that hasn't been done before. In addition, Fajardo said, the ruling suggests that the courts will play an increasingly prominent role in redistricting disputes, particularly if they involve "incumbents protecting their seats at the expense of minority communities."

"The Latino community is going to be very active in the statewide redistricting effort," Fajardo said, "and then we're going to focus on elections at-large."

American Civil Liberties Union attorney Mark Rosenbaum, who worked with Fajardo in pursuing the voting-rights suit, said at the time of Kenyon's ruling that the court decision "means that for the first time in the history of the county, the Latino community is on equal footing, and that all qualified candidates are going to have a fair and equal opportunity to serve on the most powerful body of local government in the United States."

Outside observers say the Los Angeles County remapping is bound to change the dynamics of county politics on a regional, if not statewide, level, but they stress that the ruling still only represents a piecemeal solution to the larger problem of access to the political process.

"This is a one-shot, very limited reform. It creates a Latino district, but it doesn't address the issues of district size and entrenchment. Incumbents don't have any opposition. And the nonpartisan nature of the board prevents effective challenges because there's no base, no political party, around which the opposition can be organized," said Alan Rosin, a reapportionment expert who served as staff director of the state Senate Committee on Elections and Reapportionment in the early 1970s and 1980s.

Although the Board of Supervisors is ostensibly nonpartisan, decisions made by the powerful body are nevertheless politically motivated. The five-member board has been dominated by the conservative majority of Mike Antonovich, Deane Dana and Schabarum for the past 10 years.

Each supervisor represents a constituency of about 1.7 million people, or one-fifth of the county's roughly 8.5 million residents. A member of Congress, by contrast, represents about 500,000 to 600,000 constituents. The board oversees a $9 billion annual budget and a governmental apparatus larger than that of 42 states.

"There are few jurisdictions in the country where you have so few people with so much power," Rosin said. "There are more congressmen and state legislators representing L.A. County than there are supervisors."

Increasing the board's size would be a major reform that might improve political representation in the county and make it easier to campaign against incumbent supervisors, Rosin said. He reasoned that reduced districts may make it easier to canvas and to stage effective media campaigns.

Supervisor Kenneth Hahn, who along with Supervisor Edmund Edelman constitutes the board's liberal wing, has been trying since the mid-1970s to increase the number of board members. They have had little success. County voters rejected propositions to expand the board's size in 1962 and 1976, mainly because of the perception that "bigger" government would cost taxpayers more money.

But with the entrenchment of incumbents becoming the norm, challengers unable to organize effective opposition campaigns, and the sheer number of people they represent, the supervisors have become less responsive to constituent concerns, Rosin said.

In the future, ignoring or glossing over the issues and needs of minorities may become increasingly difficult for incumbent supervisors, Fajardo maintains, especially as their districts are reconstituted to more accurately reflect the demographics and ethnic composition of the residents.

"At what point do you take into account that a minority community might be growing, and do you have an obligation to protect the interest of a particular minority community?" — a question Fajardo said was at the heart of the lawsuit. "I don't think these questions are resolved yet. But the message remains that folks better anticipate and be sensitive to the development of minority communities."

E. Page Bucy, a freelance writer in Los Angeles, wrote "An Assault on the Princes," for the January 1989 issue of California Journal.

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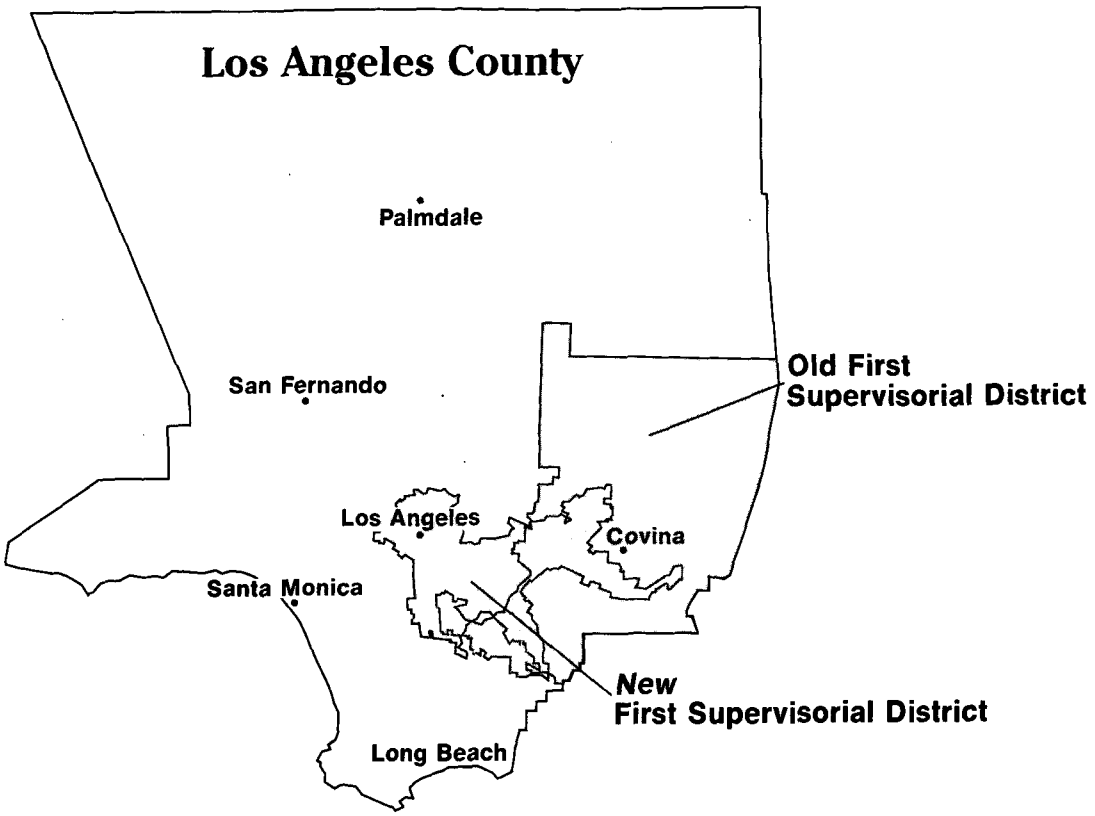

discriminated against Latinos in redistricting eventually led to the drawing of new boundaries and the call for this special election.

Latinos comprise 51 percent of the registered voters and 71 percent of the population in the 1st District, which includes East Los Angeles, Huntington Park, Mount Washington, Montebello and Monterey Park. The leading candidates — Molina, Torres, Senator Charles Calderon and former Schabarum field deputy Sarah Flores — are all Latinos.

Whoever among this quartet wins, a community long-denied political power in Southern California takes a huge step forward. Each supervisor represents 1.8 million constituents and has partial responsibility for administering an annual budget that now exceeds $10 billion.

But the candidates are too busy lining up contributors and attending forums to think about history. They are faced with the immediate and difficult problem of defining themselves as individuals in a race that is being held on behalf of their ethnic group. A political crusade to undo past injustices might suffice for Latino leaders and their allies, but it will not be enough to elect one Spanish-surnamed candidate over another. In this race each contender must break away from the pack and offer a distinct message which transcends common heritage.

Of the four, Molina and Torres have the closest ties; years ago she served as his aide. A number of voters like both of them and are agonizing over which one to choose. "I know many people — including myself — who are tearing their hair out over this one," said Louise Padden, past president of the Mount Washington Association.

The election will be won for all the usual reasons: timely phone calls, effective advertising, ability to raise money and proven constituent service. Otherwise, the race is anything but usual.

Of all the candidates, Flores, the political novice, is attempting the trickiest kind of self-definition. Coached by Ron Smith, the veteran Beverly Hills consultant who ran Ed Zschau's 1986 Republican U.S. Senate campaign, she is presenting herself as both the knowledgeable insider and the untainted outsider.

Flores the insider has spent the last 34 years working for five different supervisors. "I was there when the county had only 47 cities," she says. "Now there are 86." She knows what to expect every Tuesday when the five-member board holds its meetings. A Republican, she is well aware that the supervisors must learn to compromise, especially with those colleagues whose political philosophy the particular member does not share.

"I've worked with [Supervisor] Kenny Hahn," she says. "I like him and he likes me. I know [Supervisor] Ed Edelman, and I can work with him. There are going to be times I may be voting with Kenny and Edelman."

Flores the outsider is a rookie candidate who will be out there trying her best to collect money, endorsements and votes. She is the veteran of exactly one political campaign, the supervisorial primary held last June. Of course, in that case she received the most votes in a crowded field. But that was the old district. Today she is facing three formidable and experienced candidates.

Call her the professional county employee and the amateur politician. It's a message that deliberately makes no reference to party affiliation or ideology. Although the board is officially non-partisan, Democrats outnumber Republicans 66 percent to 23 percent in the new district. Flores is wise to keep her GOP ties as quiet as possible.

At the same time, the attention she received before and after her earlier campaign makes something of a mockery of the claim that she is a political innocent. She has been endorsed by conservative board members Mike Antonovich and Deane Dana, both of whom have access to a host of

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long-time contributors. And none other than the *Wall Street Journal* has written five pro-Flores editorials since she finished first in the primary. The paper seems to regard her with the enthusiasm it once held for supply-side economics.

Without Molina in the field, Flores could stress gender in making her pitch to voters. As important as the race is to the Latino community, many women are also intrigued by the prospect of breaking up the all-male club that has run the board.

Molina is well aware of this. Privately, if not publicly, she is seeking the financial support of women's organizations throughout the county. "I'm going to environmental groups, a lot of the Westside liberal community, feminists...," she said.

But Molina's campaign theme song is not "I Am Woman." She is running as the truth-telling, fearless politician who led the successful effort to block construction of a prison in East Los Angeles. "I want to present myself as someone who is going to be independent, aggressive about issues, and not intimidated by power brokers," she says.

Molina disparages politicians that place security before principles, or who lack drive. Did anyone mention the Board of Supervisors? "The county has exclusive jurisdiction over all health services," she noted. "and yet they act as if it's a burden to them. They have never been advocates for a comprehensive health-care system. They don't go up to Sacramento and advocate changes, talk about funding differences ..."

Molina wants to be the dynamo who galvanizes the supervisors and brings them into the open. One of her campaign proposals calls for cable television coverage of the weekly board meetings. Once elected, however, she would likely find that administering the massive government machinery of Los Angeles County is incompatible with taking too many chances. She will then face the dilemma of learning to compromise or risk becoming estranged from the others.

Torres, to some degree, is also running on an anti-county government platform. Unlike Molina, however, he is constrained by having received the endorsement of Supervisor Kenneth Hahn. Under the circumstances, it would be rather indiscreet for Torres to name names. So he attributes some of his harshest criticisms to others. "People believe the supervisors are five kings who have ruled the domain without talking to their subjects," he said.

When he's through talking about the board, Torres will remind voters of his achievements in Sacramento. This could be anything from his work as chairman of the Senate Toxics and Public Safety Management Committee (the district has had its share of foul-smelling and unhealthful dump sites) to reminding Asian voters and devotees of Chinese food that he "saved" the Peking duck in the late 1970s.

"The Chinese restaurants here were being fined between $5000 and $10,000 apiece," he said, "because the bureaucrats in the County Department of Health said hanging the ducks causes bacteria, food poisoning, even death. Well, there had not been one case of somebody dying from Peking duck food-poisoning in 5000 years. So I decided to take that on, and we changed the law."

This race is Torres' chance to go home again. He attended elementary school and community college in Monterey Park, junior and senior high school in Montebello. Though he represented much of the same district in the Legislature, Sacramento is a lot further away than downtown Los Angeles, where the supervisors conduct their business. The nearer he is to his constituents, the more effective he believes he can be. "There is a frustration I have in Sacramento in passing laws and then seeing how they are being implemented," he said. "And they are not being implemented the way we intended them to be."

If Senator Calderon shares that frustration, he's not saying. He is busily running what might be called a regional campaign in miniature, cultivating San Gabriel Valley voters while letting Molina and Torres fight over East Los Angeles, which is their traditional territory. The part of the district where he is truly unknown — Bell, Bell Gardens, Maywood — he will leave to Congressman Marty Martinez, who has endorsed his candidacy. "I believe I will win this race based on my connection to this community and my service to this community," said Calderon.

Under the heading "service" Calderon will emphasize what he did following the Whittier earthquake of October 1987, which destroyed many homes and businesses in the district: "I was the first legislator to call for a special session, and organized the political will that ultimately convinced the governor to call that session. And I drafted most of the relief legislation." He calls crime "the single most important issue" in the district, and is especially proud of the endorsement he received from an association of Los Angeles County deputy sheriffs.

Calderon, who entered the race later than the others, estimates that it will take $500,000 to wage a successful campaign — more money than he has ever raised before. Like Molina, he will be spending an inordinate amount of time on the telephone until election day.

Continuing a California tradition, the 1st District election is expected to attract a distressingly small number of voters. Ron Smith predicts a turnout of 20 percent — a figure none of the other campaigns dispute. Along with the usual suspects — apathy and anger — the race comes at a genuinely bad time. Thanksgiving and Christmas occurred during the early stages, and the election itself will take place the Tuesday following the three-day week-end commemorating Martin Luther King's birthday.

Probably never again will such a small percentage of the electorate play as vital a role in Southern California politics. Not only will they be casting their ballots for a Latino supervisor, but if Calderon, Molina or Torres wins, it will mean the end of the Republican majority that has ruled the board since 1980.

With the most obstructionist conservative supervisor of the group — Pete Schabarum — out of office, the board could very well move in an entirely new direction during this decade. The future may already be here: In early December, Republicans Antonovich and Dana joined Democrats Edelman and Hahn in approving a package of higher taxes to save the county's mental-health program from ruin. Schabarum bitterly opposed the move.

Next year it could be the 1st District supervisor setting the pace for the older gentlemen on the board. At the very least, he or she will be closely watched.

"Anglo and Black voters learned a long time ago that they have to keep their elected officials accountable to the community," said Lou Negrete, a sociologist in the Chicano studies department at Cal State Los Angeles. "The Chicano community — since Chicano elected officials are only a recent phenomenon — has got to stop looking at their people as saviors. If we get caught up in promoting the political career of an incumbent, the whole thing will be a bunch of hot air, and nothing will come of it."

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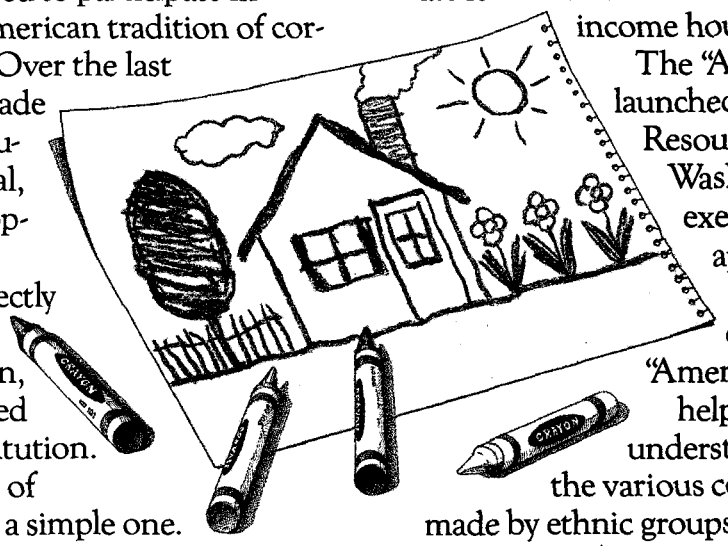

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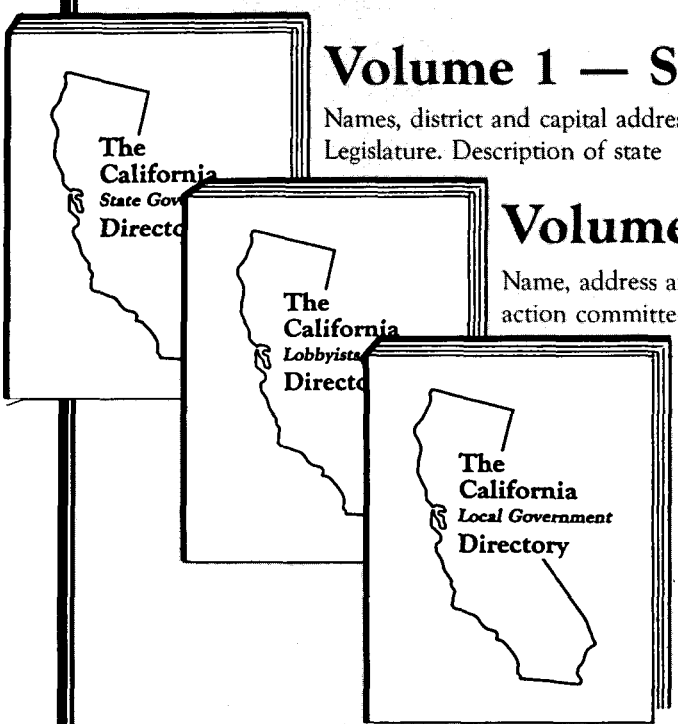

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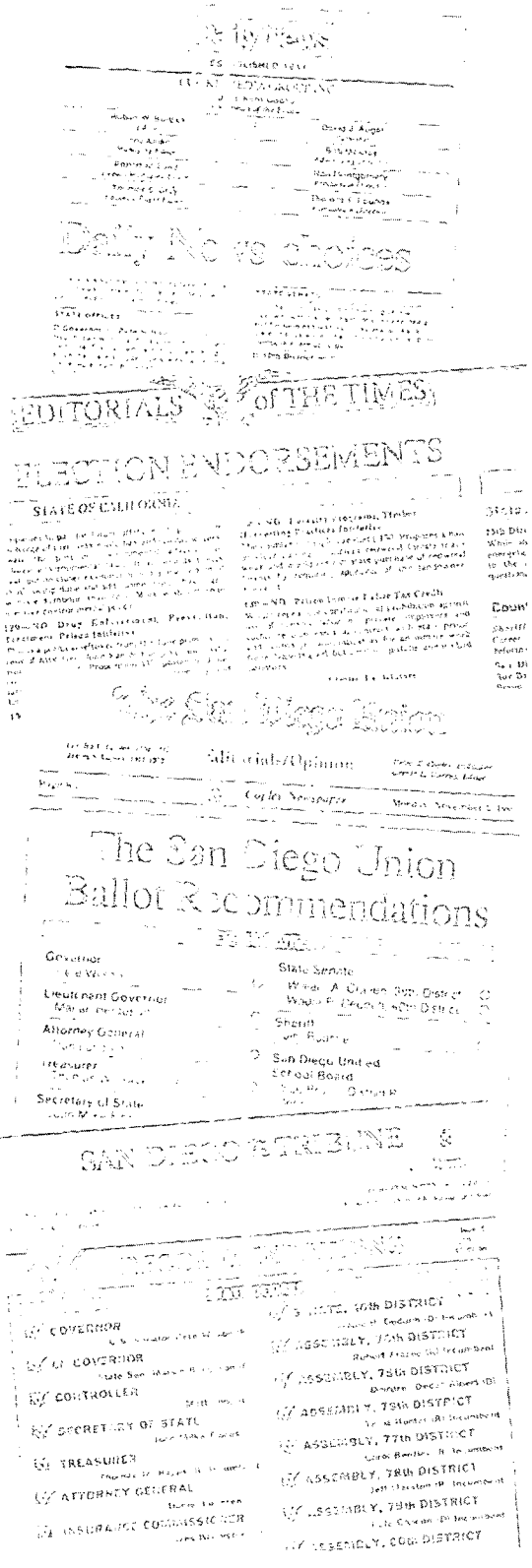
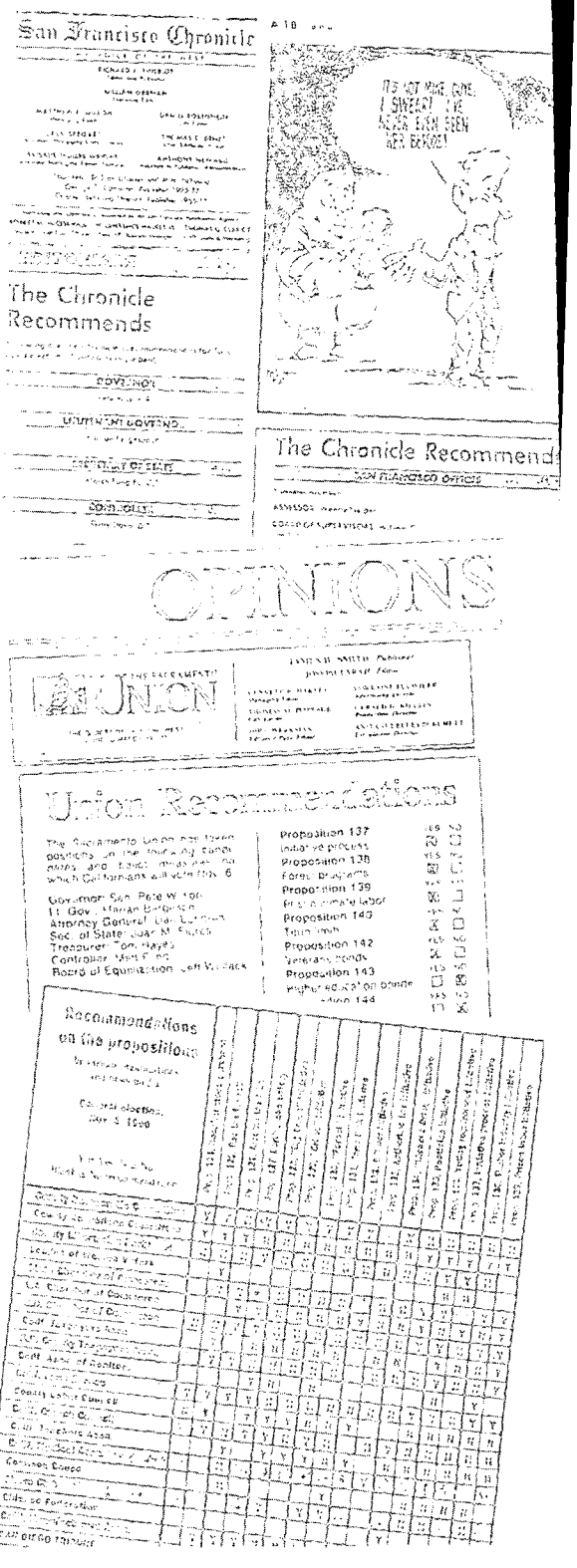
Newspaper editorials: Do they really matter?

By Bob Forsyth





Two days after last November's California election, *The Sacramento Union* — in what some saw as wretched excess — devoted a half-page to a self-congratulatory editorial, "*Union* in the mainstream."

Declared *The Union*: "The results of Tuesday's elections ... were shared by the majority of the state's voters ..." Furthermore, "On most of these positions, *The Union* was on the opposite side of the political fence from the liberal *Sacramento Bee*."

Was *The Union* really in line with the voters? Well, not quite with folks in Sacramento County which, after all, is the basic market for the 60,000-circulation "Oldest Daily in the West" and the 250,000-circulation *Sacramento Bee*. In fact, when county votes were finally tabulated, it was *The Bee*'s editorial endorsements that tended to be in tune with the marketplace.

For example, *The Bee* endorsed 68 candidates and measures facing Sacramento County voters, who went along with *The Bee* on 55 (80.8 percent). *The Union* endorsed in 44 contests. Voters agreed on 27 (61.3 percent). In a breakdown, *The Bee* endorsed in 36 state offices and propositions. County voters agreed with 28 (77.7 percent). *The Union* endorsed 32 such races; county voters agreed with the paper on 24 (75 percent). *The Bee* endorsed in seven legislative and congressional races affecting county voters, who went along with one of the paper's choices (16.6 percent).

However, on the three county measures, voters went with two of *The Union's* endorsements (66.6 percent) and only one of *The Bee's*. One of those was a county-city merger question, heavily covered by both papers, which the voters rejected. (*The Bee*

Robert Forsyth, a former journalist, is press secretary to Senate President pro Tempore David Roberti.

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favored it: *The Union* opposed it.)

Said *Union* editor Joseph Farah: "We consider that to be a big victory for us because we're the little guy." Also, Farah pointed out, the pro-merger forces out-spent their opponents in paid media.

Farah said *The Bee*'s better record on the rest of the slate is because that paper "is endorsing the establishment; entrenched candidates. It is strictly a [Democratic] party-line paper. We're the anti-establishment paper." *The Union* also endorsed every Republican on the ticket; *The Bee* endorsed several Republicans.

One of the first things Peter Schrag, *Bee* editorial page editor, did the day after the election was a private tabulation, "just to see how our whole sense of things came out." Schrag more or less liked what he saw ("We felt strongly against Proposition 140, but at least the results were narrow.") and despite defeat of *Bee*-backed Dianne Feinstein, "We knew going in that Pete Wilson would not be a bad governor."

(*The Union*, incidentally, held its nose in endorsing Wilson, whom it considers too moderate. Farah said, "If it were up to me alone, I would not have endorsed Wilson.")

Schrag said *The Bee*'s endorsements last November show it to be a "moderate-to-conservative newspaper. We were extremely conservative on the spending measures or the environmental measures because of the money attached."

But, all in all, Schrag is reluctant to see newspaper endorsements as having much influence, except in obscure races. Farah, though, believes endorsements count, particularly in complicated issues, "and people turn to a paper they trust."

Barbara O'Connor, professor of communication studies at California State University, Sacramento, noted that "in earlier times, editorial pages carried much more weight with voters, but recent history shows they carry very little weight."

Thomas Goldstein, dean of the Graduate School of Journalism at the University of California, Berkeley, believes that the "higher the political office, the less influence the newspaper has. That's because in a significant race, there is much more information around."

Read "information" to mean those often-beguiling, 30-second television spots and direct mail. The fact of contemporary political campaigns is that little of a campaign war chest goes into newspaper advertising because, according to most studies, political persuasion tends to be via the electronic media and, if done judiciously, direct mail.

O'Connor, also director of the Institute for the Study of Politics and Media at CSUS, explained how editorials are used most effectively in campaigns: "Consultants view editorials as objective sources of credibility. By using an editorial page endorsement as part of the visual, they can quickly flash a seemingly objective argument analysis and hope the voter will internalize its conclusions" — that the candidate or message is credible.

If conventional wisdom is that editorial endorsements, except in low-profile campaigns, have little or no direct influence in the paper's circulation area, then why the effort?

Thomas Gray, editorial page editor for *The Daily News* of Los Angeles (circulation: 185,000), puts it this way: "We've always thought we should speak out. It's part of the product, something that is expected. We have

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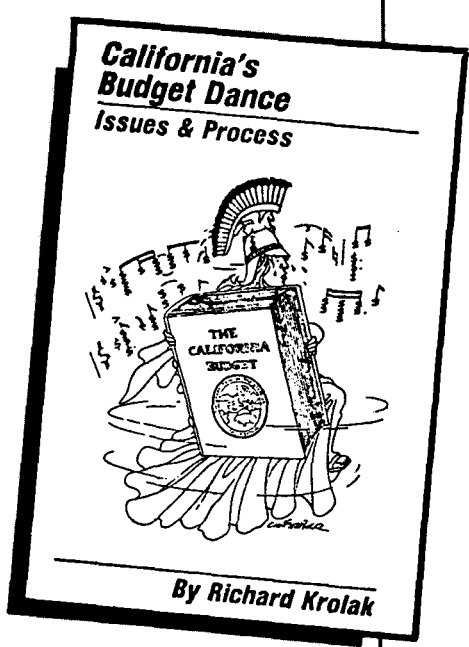

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to make a choice because the voters are going to have to do that."

Despite *The News* having done its duty last November, however, the voters of Los Angeles County tended to agree more often with the massive *Los Angeles Times* (circulation: 1.1 million). *The Times* endorsed in 35 statewide offices and propositions; Los Angeles County voters agreed on 25 (71.4 percent). *The News* endorsed in 37 such races; voters agreed on 20 (54 percent).

(At the top of the ticket, *The Times* made this note: "*The Times* does not ordinarily endorse in the contest for governor because this race attracts sufficient attention to enable voters to reach informed decisions ..." To which one editor from a different paper derisively laughed: "So arrogant. They take themselves so seriously.")

In what remains of newspaper competition in California — to a degree in San Diego, Los Angeles, San Francisco and Sacramento — editorial endorsements of the larger of the two papers tend to more reflect voters of the base counties, according to the November results.

But then there is the City by the Bay. Readers there have a choice between the fat *San Francisco Chronicle* (circulation: 560,000) and the lean *San Francisco Examiner* (circulation: 138,000). The two newspapers have a joint operating agreement that combines the business and advertising functions but leaves the editorial and news departments under separate ownership.

Yet it came as no surprise to longtime observers of the scene that San Francisco County voters agreed more with *The Examiner's* endorsements than with those of *The Chronicle*. (On 36 state offices and propositions, voters agreed with 22 *Chronicle* endorsements, or 61.1 percent; they agreed with 29 *Examiner* endorsements, or 80.5 percent)

As *Chronicle* editorial writer Michael Harris succinctly analyzed it: "The county always goes Democratic." Harris, a former veteran reporter at this "Voice of the West," said the self-described "independent Republican" paper "expresses its views, but doesn't expect people to jump through hoops."

After all, added Harris, "The purpose of the endorsement is not to tell the reader what to do, but to tell the reader what *The Chronicle* thinks."

In San Diego, the newspapers are both owned by the Copley chain with its flagship paper, *The Union* (circulation: 260,000), and sister ship, *Tribune* (circulation: 120,000). In 36 state offices and propositions, San Diego County voters went along with 25 *Union* endorsements (69.4 percent) and 21 of *The Tribune's* (58.3 percent).

"People are less readers than they used to be," lamented *Tribune* acting chief editorial writer Ralph Bennett, who thinks editorial endorsements are probably less important than in previous years. Still, he added, "Endorsements are important because so many people tell us so."

(For 10 years, *The Tribune*, by the way, has provided a reader service that perhaps no other California newspaper does: Along with *Tribune* endorsements, half of the Op-Ed page is devoted to a chart of recommendations on all the propositions — a growing election industry in California — by various organizations and news media. November's chart included 19 interest groups, ranging from the County Democratic Committee to the California Manufacturers Association, and 10 news media, including *The San Jose Mercury News* and San Diego's KNSD-TV.

Sometimes editorial endorsements have the lifespan of a snowflake. Said James Robinson, former public-affairs director for Governor George Deukmejian: "What struck us was how quickly the newspapers can change after an endorsement." Robinson, now in the private sector setting up California public-relations offices for Washington, D.C.-based Peter Hannaford, had in mind *The Sacramento Bee*.

In the 1982 gubernatorial race, *The Bee* endorsed L.A. Mayor Tom Bradley over Deukmejian. But in the 1986 rematch, *The Bee* reversed itself. Deukmejian people were understandably thrilled.

The Deukmejian-*Bee* honeymoon lasted about a day. It later seemed to Robinson that at least once a week in the next four years *The Bee* ran harsh anti-Deukmejian stuff on its editorial and Op-Ed pages. Robinson said that during that period he often wondered, "Has Governor Deukmejian let *The Bee* down, or has *The Bee* let Governor Deukmejian down?"

But even with that unsettling experience, Robinson believes the current nature of California editorial pages is healthy. "In each of the major markets — San Diego, Los Angeles, San Francisco and Sacramento — there is a newspaper that is friendly and a newspaper that is unfriendly. At least in California, there is competition for editorial views."

Schrag is not alone among editorial writers who believe that it is the "long haul" that really counts. That editorials far in advance of endorsement time tend to have impact. He said, "I don't think any newspaper has any great influence on a quick decision. My feeling is where we make the biggest difference is in setting the climate for the debate."

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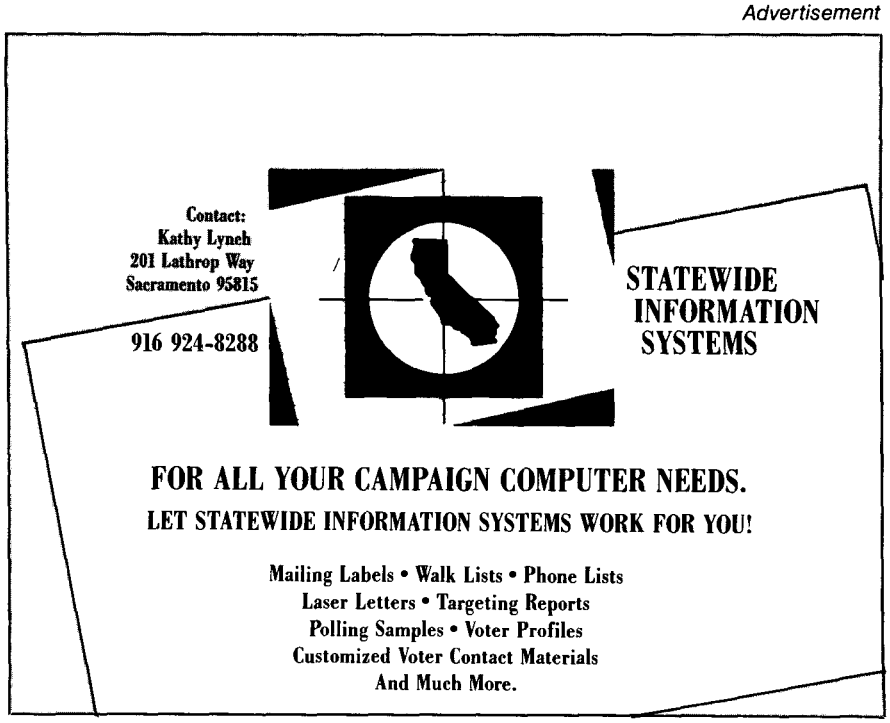

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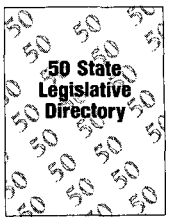

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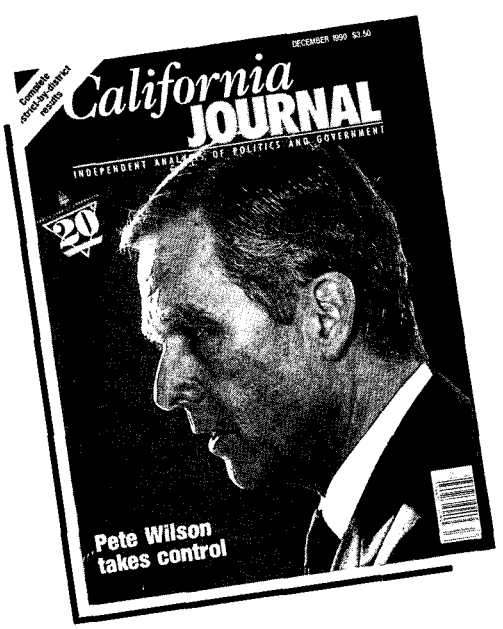

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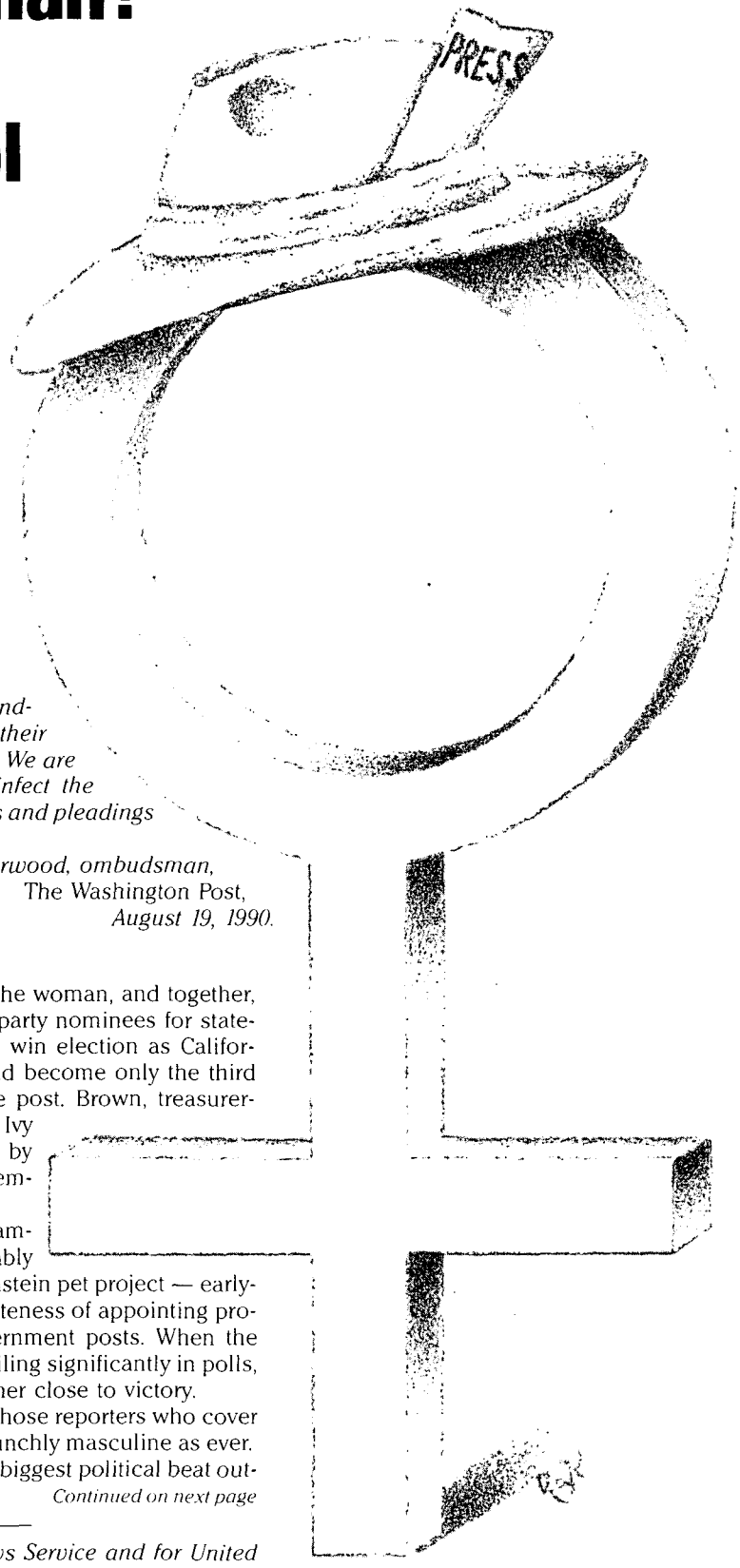
Was 1990 the "year of the woman?"

Not in the Capitol press corps.

By Rebecca LaVally



"Journalists, despite some of the mythology surrounding this business, are not anesthetized robots who lose their souls or racial identities upon issuance of a press card. We are infected by the same passions and prejudices that infect the larger societies in which we live and to whose pressures and pleadings we are vulnerable."

— Richard Harwood, ombudsman,
The Washington Post,
August 19, 1990.

Political reporters told us 1990 was the year of the woman, and together, five California women made history as major-party nominees for statewide offices. While Dianne Feinstein failed to win election as California's first female governor, Kathleen Brown did become only the third woman ever voted into a California statewide post. Brown, treasurer-elect, is preceded as a state constitutional officer by Ivy Baker Priest, who was treasurer from 1967 to 1975, and by political veteran March Fong Eu, elected this past November to a fifth term as secretary of state.

Did gender make a difference in California's 1990 campaigns? Probably. Gubernatorial electioneering predictably took in the abortion controversy but also included a Feinstein pet project — early-childhood education. Rhetoric raged over the appropriateness of appointing proportionate numbers of women and minorities to government posts. When the "undecideds" finally made up their minds, Feinstein, trailing significantly in polls, got a late shot of support from women that propelled her close to victory.

Through it all, however, the Capitol press corps — those reporters who cover the candidates and their campaigns — remained as staunchly masculine as ever.

Covering the California Capitol and environs — the biggest political beat outside of Washington — is a coveted

Continued on next page

Rebecca LaVally formerly worked for Gannett News Service and for United Press International in Sacramento. She now works for the Senate Office of Research.

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assignment, but few women have received the transfers and promotions necessary to work it. White male reporters may have said it was the year of the political woman, but they were defining the political coverage from Sacramento.

"From a personal view, it bothers me when I walk in and see it's all white men," *Oakland Tribune* reporter Kathy Zimmerman McKenna says of covering the Capitol with her colleagues. Other women reporters — outnumbered seven to one by men — say the same thing.

Most of California's big newspapers rely heavily on their Sacramento bureaus for political news, from monitoring statewide campaigns to sorting through the thousands of bills in the Legislature. White male perceptions from the very beginning have dominated the kinds of issues covered, what's said about them and, more frequently, what's left unsaid and uncovered.

Some suggest that, had she won, Feinstein's presence in the Capitol might have begun to change those perceptions. More women already were covering Democrat Feinstein and Republican rival Pete Wilson along the campaign trail than had followed previous California candidates for governor — and not entirely by coincidence.

Jerry Roberts, political editor at the *San Francisco Chronicle*, says he successfully pushed for hiring veteran reporter Susan Yoachum at his paper earlier in the year after attending a state Democratic Party convention covered by "15 white guys in blue blazers."

"It just seemed sort of silly," Roberts said, that few women were covering the hotly contested campaigns of Feinstein and Brown, who ultimately faced down incumbent Treasurer Thomas Hayes. "It put it on the agenda in a way that it hasn't been in previous years.

"I started thinking about complex issues — of men covering women and vice versa. It just improves your coverage so much to have a perspective on it that is not traditional white male."

Adds Amy Chance of *The Sacramento Bee*: "In a year when gender was very much a factor in the gubernatorial campaign, I think it helped to have reporters of both sexes as political reporters."

Women are making inroads in political coverage at home. In addition to Yoachum at the *Chronicle*, Cathleen Decker became a top Los Angeles-based political writer in 1990 for the *Los Angeles Times*. Sharon Spivak covers politics based in San Diego for the *San Diego Tribune*. Kathie Smith, who handled politics as a home-based writer for *The Modesto Bee*, has been transferred to *The Sacramento Bee*/ McClatchy Newspaper's state Capitol bureau effective in January.

Yet at the Capitol, where California's political pulse beats strongest and statewide social policy is made, women and the perspective they bring rarely decide what's newsworthy or how stories will be shaped.

Until the mid-1970s female Capitol reporters could be counted on one hand. Today it takes two hands. But the number has been dropping steadily from a peak of roughly 17 in the mid-1980s. In bureau after bureau, men have replaced the women who moved on, while in many bureaus women never got a toehold.

Most women reporters say they feel conscious of their small numbers. "When I notice it is when I go to the Capitol," says Kathleen Grubb of the Associated Press. "There'll be an impromptu news conference around Willie Brown and there'll be maybe one other woman." She calls it "discouraging."

"It's just a sea of suits and sometimes you just feel conspicuous," says Hallye Jordan of the *Los Angeles Daily Journal*. "It's pretty scary when the Legislature is accomplishing more in terms of the numbers of women members than the press is."

The Assembly in the wake of the November elections can count 15 women among its 80 members. A fifth woman joined the 40-seat Senate in 1990. (The only women ever elected to the California Senate all serve together.) With the higher visibility of women politicians in California has come a sharper focus on the quality of reproductive health care, the cost of child care, the quest for parental leaves, the plight of drug babies — and the slim numbers of women and minorities in appointed, influential government posts.

The issues were always there, but males haven't always paid heed. As Jennifer Kerr of the Associated Press says, women "will look at things men won't. Men have a tendency to look at power." Agrees Teresa Simons, formerly of UPI's Sacramento bureau, "Wom-

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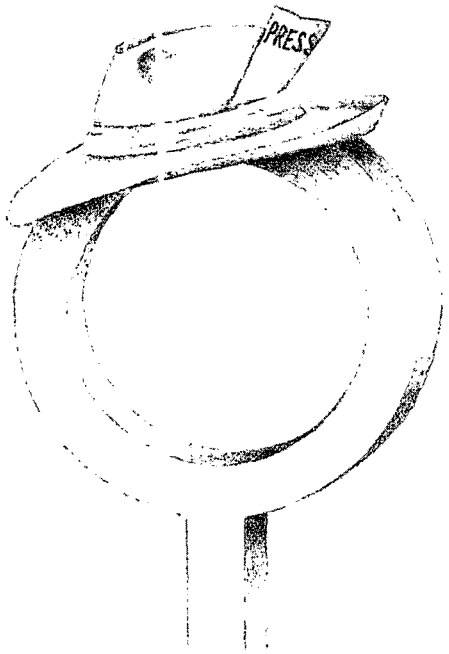

en are not as attracted to power games, but some men find them fascinating."

Male political columnists often seem to prefer exploration of political maneuvering to examination of the social issues that affect people more directly. Ramifications of Governor George Deukmejian's veto of family planning money, for instance, got serious attention when reinstatement of the money became the focus of a fierce power struggle. Had there been no struggle, there would have been less commentary on — and male interest in — a baffling veto, with devastating consequences for needy women and teenage girls.

Five years ago, in an article about the small number of women in the press corps, I ended on an upbeat note because it seemed the numbers were sure to grow. I was wrong, but no one seems certain why.

"There are (fewer) women in the press corps now than there were three years ago," observes reporter James Richardson who replaced Laura Mecoy in *The Bee*'s Capitol bureau after Mecoy was transferred to Washington, D.C., in early 1988.

"There does seem to be a tendency — I don't know if it's on purpose or not — to keep the numbers [of women reporters] down," says Kerr, who has reported for AP's Sacramento bureau since 1978.

An update of figures in the 1989-90 California Political Almanac shows that, as of the November elections, there were nine women among the 78 full-time political journalists based in Sacramento.

The Bee's Capitol bureau in 1990 counted just one woman among its staff of 12. Ditto the *Los Angeles Times*: one woman on a Sacramento staff of 12 reporters and editors.

Women reporters with full-time, permanent status have vanished over the years from the much smaller bureaus of the *Riverside Press-Enterprise*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, *San Francisco Examiner*, *Los Angeles Herald Examiner* (before the newspaper folded in 1989), *San Jose Mercury News* and Gannett News Service.

Deborah Pacyna of Sacramento television station KXTV believes she is the only woman broadcast reporter regularly assigned to cover the Capitol as a beat. Several years ago there were at least three others — two in radio bureaus and one in television.

AP, with seven reporters, has two women. UPI, with a reporting staff of five, had one — bureau chief Chris Chrystal, the only woman to head a major bureau covering the Capitol.

"In order to get these jobs, sometimes it requires hopscotching from one place to another as you climb up," Chrystal says in speculating on the dearth of female colleagues. "If you're single, you can move a lot easier. I've been single all this time; I've had the ability to pack up and go wherever I wanted, whenever I wanted."

She recalls that when UPI transferred her from its Los Angeles bureau to Washington, D.C., she arrived for work within two weeks. "I took my entire household, but it was only me. I didn't have the encumbrances of a husband, children and pets.

"Let's face it, most women want to have children and they want to be married. It's a natural, biological urge. If I'd had a family, I doubt I would have done all these things," Chrystal says of her career, which included a stint as UPI bureau chief in San Francisco before her 1989 transfer to Sacramento.

Most Capitol news bureaus have only one or two reporters and low turnovers, so replacing women with men has a long-term effect. A rare exception to the trend: McKenna in 1988 succeeded longtime *Oakland Tribune* reporter Virgil Meibert in Sacramento. He switched to the Sacramento bureau of the *Contra Costa Times*/Lesher Newspapers.

Some female reporters told me five years ago it was a waste of time to write about women in the press corps. "I don't like whiners," said one veteran, since departed. But the women who remain aren't saying that; they're looking for the answers, too.

Daily coverage of the Legislature can mean long hours and extra stresses for working parents. Weekend political conventions and campaign travel take a toll on both men and women.

"Out on the [campaign] trail, it amazes me how many of the men miss their kids. I think it's hard on everybody," says *The Bee*'s Chance, who was assigned to cover the Wilson campaign and has a three-year-old daughter. "I know it was hard for me. I have a wonderful husband who is immensely supportive ... but it is hard to be away from your family."

Still, she enthuses, "As long as the stories are hot, I kind of like doing it."

But when week-end conventions dissolve into newsless duds, or prolonged budget battles bite into summer vacations, the glamor of covering California politics can wear thin.

For working moms, Chrystal insists, balancing the competitive rigors of political reporting with the demands of home is particularly tough. "I've seen how big a struggle it is for a woman to be a mother and have a career at the same time. It's much harder for a woman than a man. Regardless of how equal a [marriage] partner is, a

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mother is still 'Mother.'"

Of her own career and consequent lifestyle, Chrystal says, "I do not regret doing things the way I did them. For me, it wasn't a sacrifice; it was a tremendous opportunity." Still, she says, "After a while, you realize some of the most important and precious things in life are having loved ones."

Perhaps my own experience is relevant here. I reported in Sacramento for a dozen years for UPI and a year for Gannett News Service, which is an industry leader in hiring and promoting women and minorities. UPI agreeably allowed me to work Sundays through Thursdays, even when I was bureau manager, after I became a mother. That meant hiring outside care for my daughter only four days a week, instead of five, and volunteering on Fridays in her classroom when she started school. Although my UPI hours were often long, I put in more volunteer time than many at-home moms.

My move to GNS meant a Monday-through-Friday schedule, but giving up Fridays with my daughter proved to be emotionally costly. GNS (like many other news organizations) wasn't willing to consider a four-day work week in Sacramento, so in 1990 I took part-time work outside the news business.

Whatever the reasons, the ratio of women in the Capitol press corps has become stuck at a dramatically lower mark than in local newsrooms — and in journalism classrooms — around the state. William Endicott, *The Bee*'s Capitol bureau chief, lays the blame on a low turnover in press corps jobs, although he acknowledges the last three women to leave his own bureau were replaced by men.

Endicott says he is keenly aware at times of the "maleness" of those who report, interpret and analyze Capitol news. At a recent reception hosted for reporters by Assembly Speaker Willie Brown, "I was struck by the predominance of White men, no question about it," Endicott says.

But he recalls that this bureau had difficulty accommodating the part-time schedule of former reporter Claudia Buck. Buck cut back her hours after the birth of a baby, then left for good after the birth of her second child. A male reporter replaced her.

Endicott says Buck was assigned mostly to feature writing because her schedule prevented her from covering a weighty beat, such as the Assembly. "It was difficult for us; it shorted us. It was difficult for her."

Another woman, Amy Pyle, who transferred to the bureau from Fresno, left after only a few months because her photographer husband had better job prospects in Los Angeles.

Chance, the lone woman in Endicott's bureau for nearly three years, has a top assignment: covering the governor. The bureau also has a Hispanic and a Black reporter, making it unusually diverse by press-corps standards.

Women reporters tend to believe they make a difference, that they sometimes see stories and filter information differently than do men. Chance says becoming a parent has further shaped the questions she asks politicians.

Virginia Ellis of the *Los Angeles Times* recalls observing to *Times* colleague Richard Paddock during a 1989 budget briefing that the spending curbs proposed by Deukmejian would fall heaviest on needy women and children.

"She quickly saw a pattern in the governor's budget," says Paddock. "Hopefully, I would have discovered it soon enough myself [but] it was helpful to have her point it out. We all bring our own perspective."

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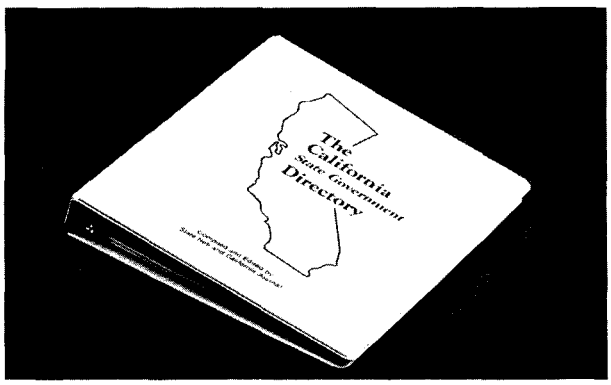

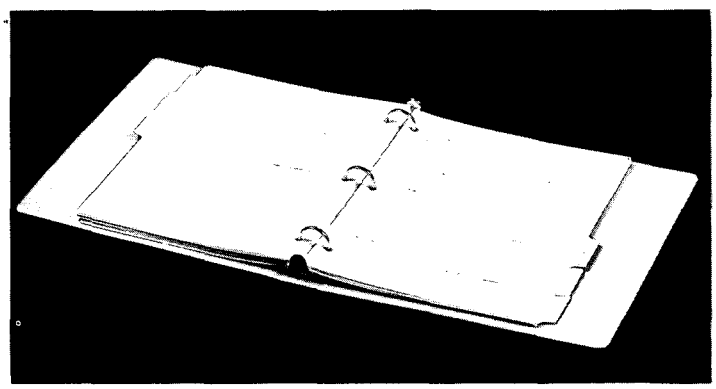

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MELLO-ROOS DISTRICTS

A new way to sell local bonds

By Debora Vrana

State Senator Henry Mello recently helped his son purchase a new home in south Sacramento. It had four bedrooms and a costly link to the senator's past — a unique tax Mello had authored eight years before.

"I thought to myself, well, the rooster has come home to roost," said the Santa Cruz Democrat. "Here, I'm obligating myself to pay for a Mello-Roos tax."

Mello-Roos, the little-known tax that got off to a shaky start in 1983, has now changed the way California counties and cities pay for such varied needs as streets, police, sewers, street lighting and schools. It is a tax as diverse as the state. Local officials can draw the taxing district boundaries in various ways, and all types of taxes can be imposed on residents.

Out-of-staters may dub it a "designer tax," and Wall Street traders may jokingly call bonds backed by such taxes "mello bonds." But with nearly $2 billion of the state's growth-related infrastructure needs being paid for by Mello-Roos taxes, no one in California is laughing.

City and county governments left strapped for funds after the passage of Proposition 13, the property tax-cutting measure voters approved in 1978, increasingly look to Mello-Roos taxes as a way to pay for needed projects. This year the Legislature passed bills allowing Mello-Roos districts to finance toxic clean-up and seismic-safety needs. It may soon be used to finance improvements to California's deteriorating inner cities.

"Mello-Roos is just growing up," said Carl Kadie, president of Kadie-Jensen, Johnson & Bodnar, a financial consulting firm located in San Diego. "It's becoming a tool for local governments instead of a tool for developers. Its future is still to be seen," he said.

The Mello-Roos Community Facilites Act of 1982 enables local governments to create districts and levy a special tax, sometimes dubbed a "designer tax" because of the law's flexiblity regarding the structure of the tax.

The legislation's political popularity can be attributed to this flexibility, since not only the tax but the district itself can be drawn in various ways, and boundaries can be created to exclude residents who oppose the tax, making bond approval more likely. For example, when the taxing districts are being formed for education funding, senior citizens are often excluded because they historically vote against school taxes.

Any type of tax can be imposed in a Mello-Roos district as long as the tax burden can be evaluated at the time of voter approval and is not levied against property values. The tax can be designed to closely mimic property taxes. For example, a district could tax the number of water meters, length of street frontage or number of acres. Even a per-capita tax could be levied.

At least two-thirds of the district's voters must approve the tax. But if there are fewer than 12 residents, the landowners vote. This makes Mello-Roos districts particularly easy to create on undeveloped land and attractive to California municipalities because the tax burden of financing infrastructure costs can be shifted to newcomers.

Californians created 57 Mello-Roos districts in 1989, for a total of 145 districts since the law was passed, according to a 1989 year-end report from the California Debt Advisory Commission. During the first six months of 1990, more than $336 million of such debt was issued by local governments. The use of Mello-Roos has not only increased in California but the states of Arizona, Texas and Florida have adopted similar legislation.

"I would never have believed that Mello-Roos would have reached the high water mark it has reached today," said Assemblyman Mike Roos, the Los Angeles Democrat who is the program's co-author. "But we knew that there was a lot of pent-up demand for this type of financing," he said.

"It has just kept expanding as the need arises," agreed Mello. "I didn't envision that Mello-Roos would be used so extensively today. We saw it as just a tool to solve some problems."

But the flexibility and complexity inherent in the tax has not only solved problems, it has caused some problems. Mello-Roos places an increased responsibility on local governments which develop the structure of the tax.

"Mello-Roos gives you enough rope with which to hang yourself," said Dean Misczynski at a 1990 San Francisco conference designed to help local officials when developing the taxing districts. "You can be unfair using Mello-Roos. What you must do, as a public finance official, is to create a sense of integrity and fairness," he said.

Misczynski, a principal consultant in the California Senate Office of Research, is familiar with the pitfalls and perils of the financing; he helped write the law.

"Mello-Roos could have been named the Misczynski Act, but no one could figure out how to spell it," said Mello.

Misczysnki said some of the potential "nooses" in creating a Mello-Roos district include potential for default on the bonds backed by taxes if the taxpayers de-

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cide the district is unfair and has disclosure problems.

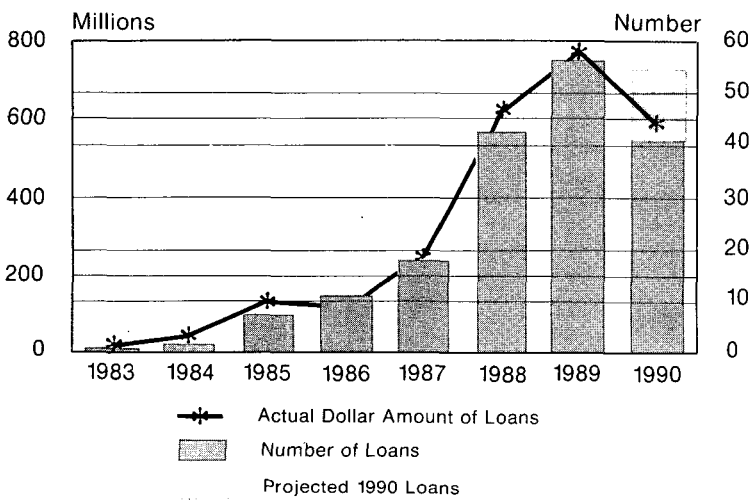
"It is possible that as more and more people start to pay the tax, we may get a revolution against Mello-Roos," said Misczynski. "It could be a problem when people who live in a Mello-Roos district pay $1000 a year but see that other people all around them aren't paying [as much]."

A bond underwriter for The First Boston Corporation in San Francisco was more explicit.

"Mello-Roos is seen as developer-driven financing," said the underwriter. "By the time the tax is implemented and people start to yell, the developer is already gone. It's tomorrow's problem," he said.

There has been some protest noise from California residents regarding Mello-Roos districts. New-home buyers in Oceanside in 1986 gathered to protest a tax they said developers didn't fully disclose to them. Home buyers in other

Mello-Roos Financing



Source: California Debt Advisory Board

early Mello-Roos districts in areas such as Antelope Valley (Los Angeles County's first district), Mountain View, Chino Hills and Creekside also found themselves burdened with taxes they didn't count on. There was talk of lawsuits.

That is rarer now, according to officials.

"I'm seeing fewer lawsuits, because I'm seeing public agencies much more cognizant of what is involved here," said Bill Stookey, chairman of Willdan Associates — an Anaheim engineering firm that consults with 23 cities on Mello-Roos and other financing tools.

"We're hired to help a city because usually the objectives of the developers and the objectives of the city council are two different things," he said.

The agenda for a city council and a developer are often different. Increasingly, local officials are developing a proactive approach towards Mello-Roos in terms of adequate disclosure of taxes to homeowners and making sure that proceeds from the tax pay for services the city needs, not those that the developer needs.

"Public entities are getting more sophisticated and making more demands on the developer in terms of disclosure," said Mark Adler, manager of municipal investment banking for Paine Webber in Los Angeles. "They are more involved in the process and insisting on the financing of certain facilities they wouldn't get otherwise," he said.

The county of Sacramento is in the process of creating its own internal guidelines for the creation of Mello-Roos districts, and Riverside County has already developed written guidelines that it presents to developers interested in building.

The California Debt Advisory Commission, an organization that keeps track of state and local bond debt, is considering conducting a study on the types of taxes in different Mello-Roos districts, according to commission executive secretary Harriet Kiyan.

"There is quite a bit of interest," said Kiyan.

Officials throughout the state are excited about the future of Mello-Roos. Some predicted that the new uses recently approved by the Legislature will mean more Mello-Roos but cautioned that the real estate slump could slow down bond issuance.

"Mello-Roos has grown impressively," said Sara Walker, vice president of Shearson Lehman Hutton in Newport Beach. "The decline in the building industry may impede it in some way, but the state has added more flexibility to Mello-Roos by allowing it to be used for toxic clean-up," she said. "There seems to be two trends going on."

As California enters the 1990s, experts predict that the use of Mello-Roos will expand. Some say districts could be created to finance inner-city projects.

"What's suprising me is that there is an increased dialogue of using Mello-Roos in inner cities," said Roos. He mentioned Los Angeles as a possible area.

Financial experts also predicted that as local governments demand more from the Mello-Roos financing tool, the tax may be used to levy fees on developers instead of on home owners. Others criticised this new use.

One of the most watched Mello-Roos districts in the state is one being developed by the city of Carlsbad near San Diego. Concern about a future revolt by home owners saddled with taxes has prompted the city to attempt to create a district that will charge developers a one-time Mello-Roos tax. Under the plan, no Mello-Roos taxes will pass through to home owners.

"The city's overriding concern is that the uncontrolled use of Mello-Roos debt ... will create a new tax burden on the citizens of California that will result in a taxpayers' revolt," James Elliott, Carlsbad finance director, told members of the California Debt Advisory Commission in May.

Roos said he thought the district was "ridiculous" and said the original law was not drafted for municipalities to charge developers.

"Regardless of whether the tax is levied on a developer or homeowner, it's going to eventually be paid by the homeowner," in the price of the home, said Roos. "With a Mello-Roos tax they get a clear look at what lighting, police and other governmental services cost. And they are the direct beneficiaries of those services," he said.

Other officials feel the Carlsbad district shows how local governments are taking charge of Mello-Roos to finance infrastructure projects that are a priority for the city's agenda, not just a tool to help developers build.

"I think that Carlsbad is a terrific example for the future of Mello-Roos," said Kadie, whose firm is helping to develop the tax. He said other Southern California cities are considering developing similar taxes.

Whatever happens with the development of the disticts, it is clear that Mello-Roos will continue to be a staple of public finance in California. "I think the future of Mello-Roos in California is very strong," said Roos.

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Tales from the crypt

Riverside County's madcap coroner

By Don Babwin

Brad and Alendra Birdsall were moving out of their Riverside house and couldn't take everything before the new owners moved in.

"We still occupy half the garage, the covered patio, the brick patio ...," they began in a handwritten note on a paper towel, as if explaining they'd left behind garden tools or Christmas ornaments.

Sure enough, when new owners Mark and Gail McClure arrived, there were 25 or so cardboard boxes and two plastic bags near a picnic bench in the backyard.

Mark McClure picked up one of the bags and took a look.

A human heart.

The Birdsalls, two Riverside County deputy coroners, were taking small pieces of people and making them into even smaller pieces — in their back yard — as part of the part-time work they were doing with a private laboratory that had contracted with the coroner's office.

Welcome to the last four years of the Riverside County Coroner's Office under the watch of elected Coroner/Public Administrator Raymond Carrillo.

Remember the tug-of-war over Liberace's body? That happened in Riverside. How about the woman whose head was cut off, frozen and then hidden from the coroner's office? Riverside. And the body of a suspected homicide victim mistakenly released and cremated before an autopsy could be conducted? Yeah. Riverside.

A quiet, anonymous office in most counties (Quick, name your coroner.), it became a headline machine under Carrillo.

The headlines actually began before Carrillo took office. In 1985 he was an unknown deputy coroner working out of the department's Indio office, some 80 miles from Riverside. The coroner, William Dykes, was retiring after seven years in office. The man who had a lock on the job was Dykes' chief deputy, Carl Smith Jr. With Dykes' endorsement, there was little doubt Smith would be the county's next coroner.

Then Smith lied to the county's Grand Jury. As Smith fought his legal problems (he eventually pleaded guilty to felony perjury and conspiracy to obstruct justice) others saw their opportunity to fight for Dykes' job; among them, Carrillo, who saw he now had a real chance. Still, in the June primary election, 33,787 Riverside County voters opted

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Don Babwin is a staff writer for The Press-Enterprise *of Riverside.*

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for Smith despite his well-publicized felonious behavior. That forced a runoff with Carrillo.

But a court ruled that Smith could not run for office. In November 1986, with Smith out of the way, Carrillo was elected the county coroner. Before he left, however, Dykes appointed Scotty Hill as the office's chief deputy. More on that later.

Carrillo, then a 57-year-old, rotund, bearded figure who resembled Santa Claus, almost immediately found himself blinded by the international media spotlight. A month after

Photos by the *Riverside Press-Enterprise*

Raymond Carrillo

Carrillo took office, entertainer Liberace died in the Riverside County resort city of Palm Springs. Before an autopsy could be conducted, Liberace's body was whisked to Forest Lawn Memorial Park in the Hollywood Hills. But Carrillo stood up to the high-priced Hollywood doctors and lawyers and said he didn't care how famous the guy was, his body was coming back to Riverside for an autopsy. An autopsy revealed Liberace died of an AIDS-related disease.

Though criticized for grandstanding (he enjoyed showing angry letters addressed to Ray "Thomas Noguchi" Carrillo), Carrillo won praise from others as a man who did what he had to do. He also got his picture in *Newsweek* magazine. This was to be the high-water mark of his administration.

A year after he stood on the lawn in front of his office talking to dozens of reporters about the Liberace case, Carrillo was back in the same spot explaining his office's investigation into the death of Dora Kent.

In December 1987 Kent, an 83-year-old woman in failing health, was taken from an area nursing home to the Alcor Life Extension Foundation facility in an industrial building on the edge of Riverside.

She was placed on an operating table. Her head was shaved. Then, depending on whom you talk to, she either simply died and her head was surgically removed and frozen in liquid nitrogen, or she was pumped full of life-ending drugs and beheaded. (Alcor, it seems, has two plans: for $35,000 they freeze your head. For $100,000 the whole body is put on ice. Kent's son opted for the former.)

The coroner's office demanded the woman's head, saying they needed it to determine the cause of death, but Alcor refused to hand it over. The coroner's office then raided Alcor's facility. The deputy coroners searching the place did not find the head, but they did come up with the woman's hands. A Riverside judge later ordered the coroner not to thaw the head — if they ever found it — and the coroner later announced he no longer wanted it, anyway.

The investigation never led to any criminal charges against anyone at Alcor. In fact, in December 1990 county prosecutors threw in the towel and announced that they would let the statute of limitations on one charge — practicing medicine without a license — come and go and that they would no longer be investigating Dora Kent's death.

Although the investigation never led to any charges against any members of Alcor, it did result in plenty of false-arrest claims filed against the coroner's investigators.

And — there's more.

Several months ago, a hiker made a grisly discovery of what appeared to be a human scalp. Detectives were called, the crime scene roped off with yellow tape and the coroner dispatched. After taking roll after roll of photographs, the deputy coroner conducting the investigation called for a vehicle to transport the remains back to Riverside some 100 miles away.

The "scalp" was placed on the autopsy table. The pathologist came into the room and looked at it. Then he flipped it over. There were four little feet. It was a dead rat. The autopsy was canceled.

Other embarrassments were less harmless.

One day in July 1988 a group of Cathedral City police officers walked into the coroner's office to attend the autopsy of a suspected homicide victim. The body bag containing the 29-year-old woman was opened. But inside was a man. Another bag was opened. No luck. Then another.

Every body bag and toe tag was checked and double checked. Nothing. Finally, she was found. Sort of. The coroner's office had mistakenly turned the woman's body over to a mortuary. The body was cremated. "Nobody looked inside the bag," Carrillo said at the time. The detectives were left with a possible murder and no murder victim.

Pathologists working at the office also got into the act. One overlooked a bullet lodged in a victim's chest. Only after a sheriff's detective said, 'Wait a minute, not so fast,' did the folks at the coroner's office conduct a second autopsy. Hey, that thing in the body is a bullet, a second pathologist determined.

Some autopsies on suspected homicide victims were delayed because the district attorney's office had misgivings about the abilities of one of the pathologists.

The doubts about the office spread through the community. Anthony Bambu called the local newspaper after being told his brother had committed suicide. Bambu knew

William Dykes

his brother did not kill himself, no matter what the coroner said. And sure enough, after more than two months of trying to get someone to listen to him, Bambu finally got the coroner's office to admit its mistake. But not before his family, devout Catholics, had to live with the stigma of a suicide.

Mistake after mistake took its toll on the office. Bambu did not hammer the coroner with a lawsuit, but others did. A little uncomfortable with the idea that parts of a loved one

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were being sliced and diced on a picnic table in the Birdsall's backyard, a Riverside family filed a $10 million lawsuit. The new owners of the house, Mark and Gail McClure, stayed in the house but expressed their anger with a lawsuit of their own.

Carrillo's reaction to the bad ink did not resemble President John Kennedy's response to the Bay of Pigs fiasco. The buck may have stopped with Carrillo, but only for a minute. He passed it around.

Somebody had it in for him and his office, Carrillo claimed without offering any proof. The guys he was saddled with when he took office were the problem, he said. He pointed a finger at his chief deputy, Scotty Hill. He blamed another supervisor in the office. Carrillo had everyone looking over his or her shoulder, wondering when and on whom the ax was going to fall. He demoted and fired an employee — even though the man he fired had just been

Scotty Hill

Carl Smith

promoted with Carrillo's approval. Morale dipped lower and lower, to the point last year where more than half his employees cast a vote of no-confidence against their boss.

That prompted Carrillo's wife, Lupe, to leap into the act with her version of "Stand By Your Man." She telephoned the office with a message: Either the employees support her husband or she was going to the newspaper with information about a sexual affair within the coroner's Indio office.

The county's grand jury investigated the office and came away with the recommendation that the coroner turn the keys to the office over to the sheriff's department. In California, coroner's offices in 39 of the 58 counties are run by the county sheriff.

Carrillo did have his victories, though. After complaining about not having a second-in-command loyal to him, he was given the chance to hire an assistant. He chose R. M. "Mickey" Worthington, a deputy coroner who himself had run for coroner in 1986.

Worthington was loyal and eager to point out Carrillo's successes. When asked to comment on how Carrillo had beaten him in 1986, Worthington piped up that it was Carrillo's use of signs. "When I saw those signs," he said, "I knew I was dead." The signs said something like "Ray Carrillo for Coroner."

Worthington took every chance he could to jump to Carrillo's defense. Once during Carrillo's appearance on a radio call-in show, no listeners called in. Worthington picked up a phone. "Hi, this is Mickey in Riverside," said a voice over the air that proceeded to defend the coroner.

So it was on this record that Carrillo ran for re-election.

The campaign attracted some old and new characters and, like in the last four years, took a few twists and turns.

Thomas Decker, foiled in his bid for county marshal when that office was abolished, was one of three men to challenge Carrillo. Decker had some pretty heavy hitters in his corner. Mrs. Omar Bradley was behind him, he said. And Trini Lopez, too, had offered his support. The entertainer said later that, yes, he did know Decker casually, but that was all. "Tony Orlando said he'd support me," Decker said. "But I can't get him on the phone."

The race was really fought by three men: Carrillo, Hill

Rene Modglin

and Dr. F. Rene Modglin, a respected pathologist who performed thousands of autopsies for the county until 1988 when Carrillo declined to renew his contract.

Hill's main campaign strategy was to remind voters that honest-to-god, I had nothing to do with the screw-ups of the last four years. Not much of a platform, but it was more than he had had in 1980, when he ran for the office even though he admitted he had no issues. Uncomfortable with campaigning, in interviews Hill relied heavily on what he'd written on index cards. Why are you running for office? he was asked. Pause. Because, he said (shuffling through the deck of cards until he found the appropriate one), I want to return integrity to the office.

It was Modglin, with his years of experience and excellent reputation, who was Carrillo's strongest challenger. Modglin was, however, the owner of the laboratory that allowed the Birdsalls to take their work home with them. Nevertheless, Modglin took the support of police and prosecutor associations and, in the June primary, easily outdistanced Carrillo and knocked Hill out of the race.

Modglin looked like a sure winner in the November run-off. Unfortunately, he died. A virus he may have contracted while conducting an autopsy, perhaps several years before but which had remained dormant, attacked his brain.

Modglin died in August, in time for Hill to get his name put back on the ballot. The campaign was, for the most part, a quiet one. But it did include a clown. Complete with grease paint and a red nose, the man carried a sign and told anyone who would listen that he was Ray Carrillo. At a political forum attended by both men, Carrillo said Hill hired the clown. Hill did not respond at the time, explaining later that a political forum was not the place to respond to such a charge. A few days later he did say he would not be surprised if Carrillo himself had hired the clown.

The clown said neither man hired him. He was his own clown.

In November, voters had a choice between a man who promised to be the "silent coroner" and another man who, while not quiet during the last four years, had at the very least been an entertaining coroner.

Silent won big.

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WASHINGTON PERSPECTIVE

By LARRY LIEBERT

Swan songs

It's a trap that most governors fall into sooner or later. When times are good, they attempt to take all the credit. They make hyperbolic claims about the buoyant "business climate" they created.

WHEN THE ECONOMY TAKES A downturn, the same governors find it more difficult to blame "outside forces" for plunging their states into economic darkness and throwing their state budgets out of whack.

In truth, governors are, at best, bit players in the making of economic cycles, which are resistant even to the budgetary policies of presidents and the monetary policies of the Federal Reserve.

This assessing of economic credit and blame has been vividly illustrated in the end-games of two very different governors who are leaving office — Michael Dukakis of Massachusetts and George Deukmejian of California.

It seems it was ages ago when Democrat Dukakis offered himself for president on the strength of the "Massachusetts miracle" that he had supposedly engineered as governor of that booming state. Now, Dukakis is retiring from office, not as his state's senior statesman but as a has-been. Dukakis is widely blamed not only for his disastrous presidential campaign but also for his management of a state economy that has sunk into debt and recession. Every politician in his state ran against Dukakis in November, and a Republican ended up in charge of the statehouse.

Republican Deukmejian is by no means so detested a figure. But there are similarities. Taking office after the innovative but maddeningly quirky Governor Jerry Brown, Deukmejian fashioned himself the reliable, even stubborn, steward of the state purse. Soon he was boasting that he had brought California's state finances "from I.O.U. to A-O.K."

But that proved to be a vulnerable claim on which to stake his legacy. Deukmejian spent the final year of his term desperately scrambling to patch up the state's crumbling finances — and to avoid leaving an I.O.U. reminiscent of the $1.5 billion shortfall that he inherited from Democrat Jerry Brown.

"The budget crisis this year did not reflect well on any of the participants," Steve Merksamer, Deukmejian's first-term chief of staff, said late in 1990. He was referring to the governor's feuding over the budget with Democratic leaders of the Legislature.

As a reporter in Sacramento, I covered the early months of the Deukmejian administration. There was considerable energy and a sense of purpose as the new governor went about the task of dismantling the policies that Brown left behind and turning California back to the conservative course that had been set for it under the administration of Ronald Reagan.

Watching the governor's second term — admittedly from a considerable distance in Washington, there seemed to be no compelling second act — nothing Deukmejian really wanted to do but mind the store and prevent anything liberal from happening.

Clearly, Californians have grown disenchanted with Deukmejian in his second term. *The California Poll* showed a steady deterioration in Deukmejian's standing with voters last year, although he has not sagged as low as Governors Pat and Jerry Brown at the close of their terms. As of August, Deukmejian's performance was rated as "excellent" or "good" by 36 percent, "fair" by 33 percent and "poor" or "very poor" by 29 percent.

"I think there's a certain healthy life span for governors in California that generally begins to end around the second term," said Larry Thomas, who was Deukmejian's first-term press secretary. "I think that even with the criticism that the governor receives, comparatively he leaves on a high, if you look at the last couple of governors. He's been steady and resilient."

It was no compliment to Deukmejian that the race to succeed him revolved around how to change his policies rather than how to continue them. Democrat Dianne Feinstein promised dramatic change. At least as significant, winning Republican Pete Wilson promised voters that he, too, would be a more activist governor than Deukmejian.

At first, Wilson explicitly criticized Deukmejian by vowing to do better in such areas as education and environmental protection. After Deukmejian loyalists expressed outrage at those attacks from a fellow Republican, Wilson toned down his comments, but the implicit criticism remained.

"There's a natural tendency to run against the person you're succeeding," said Merksamer. "Ronald Reagan was going to clean up Sacramento after Pat Brown. I believe George Deukmejian was successful in his quest to be governor because he contrasted so brilliantly, not from [opponent] Tom Bradley but from Jerry Brown.

"Deukmejian was careful, conscientious, stable, boring, plodding," said Merksamer. "That's what people wanted after eight years of Jerry Brown. Now, after eight years of that kind of leadership, they probably want to go to a more exciting style."

DEUKMEJIAN'S LOYALISTS INSIST HE WILL be more appreciated in retrospect. "The basics were done" during the Deukmejian years, said one long-time adviser, comparing the departing governor to President Dwight D. Eisenhower.

Merksamer ticked off first-term accomplishments that included remolding the state courts in his conservative image, building more prisons and improving the University of California system. Thomas said Deukmejian will be remembered for "bringing this state back to stability and living within our means."

If so, it was an accomplishment that began to fray after eight years.

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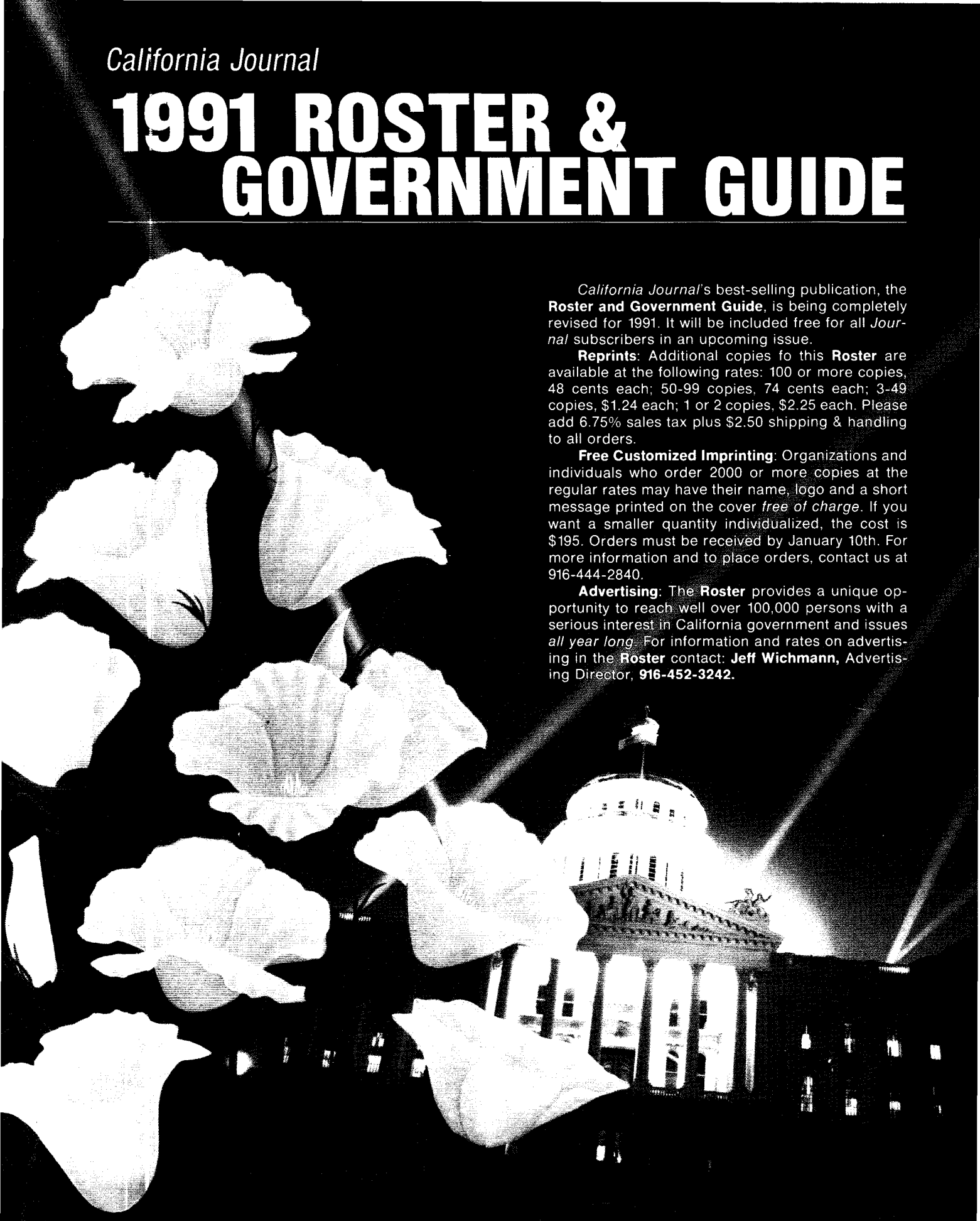
California Journal

1991 ROSTER & GOVERNMENT GUIDE



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